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"All My Life I've Been Using Microsoft Word!": Incorporating Kidspiration, Power Point and Word into a Second Grade Writing Workshop

Ashley Murawski
The College at Brockport

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*“All My Life I’ve Been Using Microsoft Word!”:
Incorporating Kidspiration, PowerPoint and Word into a
Second Grade Writing Workshop*

by

Ashley Murawski


August 2011

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of
The College at Brockport, State University of New York
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Master of Science in Education

“All My Life I’ve Been Using Microsoft Word!”:
Incorporating Kidspiration, PowerPoint and Word into a
Second Grade Writing Workshop

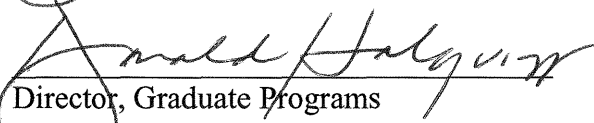
by Ashley Murawski

APPROVED BY:



Advisor

08.16.11
Date



Director, Graduate Programs

08.16.11
Date

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Chapter One

Introduction

I look up from the table where I'm helping Maria (all names are pseudonyms) edit her story. One glance around my second grade classroom shows a busily humming, productive writing workshop. Matt and Greg are buddy writing in the reading corner, although they are distracted by Phil, who's practicing origami in preparation to write his "How to make an origami frog" book. Matt and Greg quickly find scrap paper and are trying Phil's directions for themselves.

Across the room, four girls are working at a table, occasionally chatting and helping each other along: reading sections of their writing aloud, correcting some misspellings, discussing the upcoming weekend. Their continuous giggles rise above the classical music playing in the background and frequently attract the attention of the other students working around them.

Annie is working at the computer, trying to add a picture to her Microsoft Word document, a cover for the nonfiction book she just finished writing entitled "How to Draw a Flower." She leans over and asks Heidi, who quickly shows Annie how to "insert" clip art, then turns back to her own computer to finish typing an invitation to our upcoming Author Celebration. Although all the students seem engaged during writing workshop time, it's clear to me that the two students working at the computers are the most focused on their writing, only stopping their work to

seek, or give, assistance. While the other students are busy, it doesn't appear to me that they are as focused and interested in their writing projects.

I recognize that my second graders are part of the "Net Gen," (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007), students who "thrive on the utility of technology, creativity, social interaction and community" (Nichols, 2007, as cited in Edwards-Groves, 2011, p. 52). My students all want iPods, computers, and cell phones, and are continuously excited and engaged by technology in the classroom, especially in reading and writing, as Annie and Heidi displayed. My students enter second grade with a range of attitudes, abilities, beliefs and skills related to computers and technology, and it's exciting to learn more about their interests while helping them expand their knowledge.

Digital literacy, the ability to produce and distribute text in new ways (Merchant, 2007), is an aspect of literacy that is essential in today's society. Producing texts on a computer doesn't have to mean simply typing a piece of written work - as opposed to traditional books, digital texts are often nonlinear, and full of effects and animation. These new features allow for texts that are interactive and engaging, and I am excited to try them in my classroom. The formats will give my students more choices about how to present their pieces of writing. Many of my students are beginning to use computers as a way to read, write, and communicate, and I want to continue to develop ways to support their learning with instruction in navigating and creating digital texts.

As computers and other forms of technology become more prevalent in schools, I want to find the most effective ways to incorporate them into my classroom. I aspire to, as Merchant (2007) states, “pay serious attention to the ways in which we might help children and young people develop a fluency in digital literacy” (p. 118). Although many of my students refer to computers as “toys,” I concur with Van Leeuwen and Gabriel (2007) who state that computers should be used as tools to “complement the range and type of writing activities in elementary school classrooms” (p. 427). By educating my students and helping them learn how to use common programs such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration to express their ideas effectively through graphics and text, I can enable them to become critical users of technology, and help them to see past the novelty of colored fonts or animated pictures to recognize and use the possibilities of authentically and purposefully creating digital texts.

Significance of the Problem

Several researchers have found that teachers use computers in their classrooms primarily to “publish,” or type, finished pieces of writing (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). While this task is certainly a worthwhile one, I have seen a number of teachers who only have their students type a few words or sentences - the teachers begin and finish the process. I agree with Merchant (2007) who observed that isolated activities like these are “a worrying sign

of the growing distance between everyday literacy practices and schooled literacy” (p. 118).

Many of my students come to school with knowledge and skills regarding computer technology, and I believe that I should incorporate those skills into our classroom activities. I believe teachers need to authentically integrate technology throughout their curriculum and provide students the opportunity to explore that technology so they can become “capable of flexible thinking and independent learning” (Kervin & Mantei, 2009, p. 20). Some technology skills need to be explicitly taught, but students also need opportunities to use those skills for real purposes, like researching a topic or creating a presentation, and become informed decision makers.

In contrast to simply using computers for typing, “a contemporary focus on writing highlights how technology use also enables possibilities for creativity – *new* creativities” (Edwards-Groves, 2011, p. 51), and this is often appealing to the new generation of students. Many of my students are excited to use computers, and I can seize the opportunity to explicitly teach computer programs, because “children need to know the ‘skills’ of both language and technology, but with opportunity to use these within authentic, meaningful, and contextualised experiences” (Kervin & Mantei, 2009, p. 20). I agree that when students are taught the processes and steps necessary to use a computer program, they are internalizing skills that will benefit them long after the school year is over (Borawski, 2009). Basic computer skills, such as saving a document or changing font styles, can be used throughout a student’s

academic career. I believe that students cannot learn authentic skills and become proficient users of technology without a classroom context that embraces the benefits of technology, teaches the drawbacks, and supports creativity and exploration.

Teachers who incorporate technology in their writing classrooms and curriculum often find their students are producing equivalent or improved quality of work as compared to traditional methods, like paper and pencil writing (Kara-Soteriou, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). Writing workshop (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983) has long been regarded as a way for students to authentically learn how to write, through choice of topic, peer interaction, and time spent working with a teacher (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). The structure defined by Donald Graves (1983) and Lucy Calkins (1986) allows for student choice and collaboration, and is a natural fit for the incorporation of technology. It has been shown that “engaging technologies can inspire students to write, write more, and write longer in the writing workshop” (Kara-Soteriou, 2007, p. 698). With the freedom of choice that writing workshop provides, students are able to make informed decisions and use technology to produce the best written product, whether they are using the Internet for research, a visual program (such as Kidspiration) to create a graphic organizer, or a word processing program to type their story.

Writing instruction is changing as computer technology becomes more prevalent in the classroom. Kara-Soteriou (2007) stated that “different types of software make the writing process more efficient” (p. 699) and Van Leeuwen and Gabriel (2007) expanded on that idea, recognizing that “the use of a different tool – a

computer with word processing software...introduces a new realm of possible differences in attitudes, interactions, instructional strategies and written products” (p. 421). By understanding both how students engage in the process of writing with computers and computer programs, and analyzing the quality of the work they produce, I believe teachers can be better informed as to what are the most effective and engaging ways of incorporating computer technology into writing.

Research shows that the writing process, as outlined by Donald Graves (Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983), is also changing to meet the needs of new technologies, and writing curriculum itself must follow as well (Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). The traditional cycle of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983) can take different forms, but Edwards-Groves (2011) asserts that “writing in new times demands that pedagogical practices and understandings incorporate ‘designing’, ‘producing’ and ‘presenting’ as key elements of the writing process” (p. 62). Merchant (2007) agrees that “digital literacy involves different ways of producing and distributing text, [and] it creates new possibilities of how we might operate in and construct the educational environment” (p. 123). By working in a setting such as the writing workshop, with its focus on experimentation and collaboration, students and teachers can begin to explore and embrace digital literacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate what happened when I incorporated Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration into my second grade writing workshop. I studied both the engagement of the students and the quality of writing they produced while using the aforementioned computer programs. My second grade students were familiar with some of the programs when they began the school year, but many of them had never been explicitly taught how to use the programs – they had only learned through exploration, either in kindergarten and first grade or at home.

I believe that when students aren't taught the basic functions of these computer programs and simply "play" on the computer instead, it can be problematic. There is a time for play, but students also need to be explicitly taught the more common applications of the programs, such as typing and saving a document, so they understand how and when to use them (Borawski, 2009). By learning how to use the full range of features and functions of a particular program, students will become more proficient and efficient when using the computer programs at home or at school. This may also help students start thinking about the uses of different programs, and begin deciding how they can be used to express their ideas and improve their writing.

In order to determine the effects of incorporating the different programs, I researched the following questions:

- In what ways does the use of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration affect my second graders' engagement in the writing process?

- How is the quality of my second graders' writing development and abilities affected by the incorporation of Microsoft Word, Microsoft Power Point, or Kidspiration into writing workshop?

While investigating these questions, I observed what happened when my students had the opportunity to use computer programs while they were writing, and how they implemented the various features of the programs and made decisions about their use. This information will inform my teaching as I continue to seek more effective and engaging ways of incorporating word processing, visual learning, and presentation software into my students' writing workshop. Simply letting my students use a computer isn't enough; I believe educating them to become critical users of technology in order to produce quality work is more important. I also believe that students should have the opportunity to use technology in a writing workshop to improve their writing, but in order to do that, the students need to be informed about the functions and uses of different computer programs, and understand the most effective ways to use those programs.

As a researcher, this was my first formal study. I refined my skills as a researcher, an effective observer and note-taker, and presented my information in the best possible way. The results of the study will be most beneficial to me, but I ensured that my study is informative and relevant, should anyone else be interested in the results. This study directly affects my instructional practices. By investigating the ways students interact with computer programs, I can better learn how to teach those

programs in the future. In addition, identifying the positives or negatives of using the computer programs in the writing workshop can help to guide my writing instruction.

Study Approach

My research study was a qualitative study that focused on three case studies of students. It was a six-week study, and took place in my second grade classroom. My classroom is located in a K-12 school in western New York. The twenty students were ages seven and eight, and in addition to me, there was a special education teacher and a teaching assistant in our classroom. My teaching assistant worked in our classroom daily during writing workshop, and my special education teacher assisted occasionally. In order to investigate how my second graders' writing was influenced by the various software programs, and the choices the students made in response to the programs, I observed them, both in the classroom during our daily writing workshop and in the computer lab during our dedicated 45 minute instructional computer time, which occurred approximately once every two weeks during the course of the study.

I took anecdotal notes during the observations (see Appendix A), and interviewed (see Appendix B) my students to gain their insights about their final written work, and the process involved. I audio taped and transcribed all interviews. After interviewing the students, I analyzed their writing projects to determine the quality of the work, which focused on both the effectiveness of the choice of program, and quality of writing (varying sentence length, interesting word choice, and

correct conventions). I used rubrics (see Appendix C), which students had access to before and during the writing project, to evaluate the writing. The students also had the opportunity to self-assess their writing on the rubrics. Although the content of the rubrics varies slightly depending on the genre that was chosen by the students, they are similar.

Rationale

As I stated earlier, I conducted this study in my classroom with my second grade students. I value technology as an integral part of learning, and the students have learned how to use the SMARTBoard and the computers throughout the school year. The work they undertook as part of this study was a natural extension of their learning.

I narrowed my focus to three programs, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration, to offer students freedom and choice without overwhelming their capabilities as primary students. The students were familiar with all three programs by the start of the study, and had an understanding of the basic functions of each. I explicitly taught some basic functions of the computer programs to my students, including opening and saving documents, inserting clip art, and editing the text to change the font and size. I provided ample opportunities to practice the skills that I taught and for the students to explore the programs on their own. Since we had four computers in our classroom, my students were able to use those programs during both our writing time and their free time.

My teaching assistant and I implemented a writing workshop model during our writing time all year, and the various software programs fit naturally into that structure. My students had the opportunity to work through the writing process at their own pace, and had teacher and peer support when needed. The new challenge, though, was for the students to determine which computer program would best fit their purposes for this final writing project. Each student was given a list with all the titles of their published writing pieces from second grade. Then, each student was to select one title, create a new piece of writing, and then choose the program that would be most beneficial to presenting his or her work. Because of their age and notion of concreteness, my students were unable to brainstorm a new idea from a previously created title. Instead, the project was changed and the students made lists of topics they were interested in, and chose one from that list to develop.

I believe that for me to understand the most beneficial and effective ways to use technology in my classroom, the users of that technology – my students – should have some part of the discussion. By investigating the ways that my second graders approached and used Word, PowerPoint and Kidspiration, along with analyzing the quality of their writing products, I gained a better understanding of the ways my students interpret and make decisions regarding the best uses of technology.

I used my observations and interviews to learn more about my students' attitudes and abilities. Although my anecdotal notes provided observations regarding the workings of the class as a whole, as well as individual students, I transcribed my interviews in order to clearly share each student's explanation about his/her

experience with this project. Through the interviews, I gained insight into each student's thought process during the writing process, as well as his/her opinion about writing with and without technology.

I used rubrics to evaluate the quality of the students' work, and evaluated the content, word choice/sentences, conventions (COPS) and presentation on the piece of writing on a scale of one to three. By evaluating the quality of the work, I can better understand the ways that computer programs are beneficial to my second grade writers. I shared the rubrics with my students ahead of time, with full explanations of their role in the writing assignment. Just like with any other writing project, I tried to be clear about my expectations, so the students would have a focus to guide their work.

Summary

In this study, I investigated how the integration of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint and Kidspiration into writing workshop influenced the writing processes and abilities of my second graders. They were provided with an open-ended writing project and had the opportunity to decide which computer program would be the most effective for presenting their writing. I used anecdotal notes and interviews to gain insight into several students' thinking, primarily focusing on their decision making regarding the use of the computer programs, the process of using the computer program he/she selected, and his/her reflections on the quality of the final product. I also used a rubric to evaluate the quality of work that was produced with the use of

the computer programs. The students had an opportunity to self-assess their work, and then we discussed their results compared with mine, according to the rubric. This six week study was an opportunity for me to help my students become more informed users of these computer programs, and begin to think critically about their uses.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I describe the literature relevant to my thesis topic. I have organized it into three sections: (1) the writing workshop and the writing process in elementary classrooms, (2) the effects of incorporating technology into elementary writing classrooms, and (3) a definition of digital literacy and its influences in the elementary classroom. At the end of each section, I discuss the relevance of the literature in relationship to the literacy activities in my second grade classroom.

The Writing Workshop and the Writing Process

Writing Workshop

The writing workshop was pioneered by Lucy Calkins (1986), who realized that the writing classroom should be “kept *predictable* and *simple* because the work at hand and the changing interactions around that work are so unpredictable and complex” (p. 183, italics in original). A common practice in elementary classrooms, the workshop structure consists of four parts: a minilesson, a time for students to work and confer with peers or a teacher, a time for sharing, and occasionally, celebrations of published writing (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The minilesson is a time for students to briefly gather in a group, usually at the beginning or end of the workshop, while the teacher offers some inspiration or instruction to the students. The minilesson should be short and practical, so students have the

opportunity to apply the ideas during the workshop (Calkins, 1986). The majority of the time is spent writing. Students have the opportunity to work anywhere in the room, and are often working on different pieces or are at different stages of the writing process. The teacher is available to confer individually with students, which is the heart of the writing workshop (Calkins, 1986). Sharing comes both at the end of the day and during celebrations. The daily sharing time provides students an opportunity to practice sharing with and offering suggestions to their peers, while the celebrations are done more sporadically. The celebrations are a chance for students to share several published pieces of work with their friends and families (Calkins, 1986).

Many authors, researchers, and teachers have found that this structure is beneficial to young writers because of the importance placed on student choice and ownership over topics and pacing (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007; Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001). In their study, Jasmine and Weiner (2007) observed 12 boys and 9 girls in a first grade classroom, and concluded that the students were more independent and enthusiastic writers after the implementation of the workshop model. Since the students had the opportunity to select their topics, work with their peers, and share their writing, the students were more engaged and confident writers (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Similarly, Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski and Henry (2007) stated that the flexibility in writing workshop enables students to have many resources available, and they are able to write better, and longer, stories. The students also have the

freedom to work at their own pace, and confer and collaborate with peers or teachers as needed (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007).

Another benefit of the writing workshop model is the ownership of the writing pieces that are created by the student (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001, Graves, 1986; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Within the parameters of the writing workshop model, students are free to be creative in their writing and are not just limited to the topic or structure generated by the teacher. Students begin to develop their own rhythm to the writing process, and while some may take longer than others to publish their writing, everyone is continuously working on meaningful pieces of writing (Calkins, 1986). These authentic writing tasks allow students to utilize what has been taught in the minilesson, while incorporating their own personality and voice. Researchers have found that when students are independent and feel ownership over their learning, such as in the writing workshop, they are often more confident and capable writers (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001). Providing students ample opportunities to choose their own writing topic also strengthens their skills as writers. Graves (1986) noted that significant growth in both information and writing skills was seen in the students who were most successfully choosing their own topics. Additionally, when students feel safe to take risks and take control of their writing, they will inevitably encounter some difficulties and disappointments, but ultimately learn more about themselves and become stronger writers as a result (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1986).

Writing Process

For students to be successful in the writing workshop, they need to have an authentic purpose for writing each time they write (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983). Educating students about the writing process is the best way to help them create exemplary pieces of writing (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The writing process, another common practice in elementary classrooms, is the cycle of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and possibly publishing that writers go through (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001). When students begin to see writing as a process, as opposed to an assignment, they realize that the work is never truly completed. Students understand that after publishing a piece of writing, it is time to begin a new piece (Calkins, 1986). Graves and Calkins emphasized the importance of learning the process so students could adapt their skills to the task at hand (as cited in Jasmine & Weiner, 2007), as opposed to only learning the skills needed for one task. Jasmine & Weiner (2007) go on to elaborate that as students learn the components of the writing process, including drafting, editing and revising, they are able to successfully work through the process on their own. The writing process also allows for meaningful learning and rich discussion about the work involved (Jacobs, 2004; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Many researchers have found that conversations are an integral part of the writing workshop (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001) and the writing process can help students focus their thinking to confer effectively about their

writing. These discussions can also help students become more aware of their strengths and needs as writers (Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001).

In My Classroom

The students in my second grade classroom worked in writing workshop, and with the writing process, throughout the school year. The students understood the steps of the process, and were able to select topics they were interested in and write for authentic purposes, such as pen pal letters or writing a nonfiction piece to share research (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). We had writing workshop every day, and the predictable routine allowed for an efficient beginning to the work session. We began each session with either a minilesson or the “status of the class” routine, where students orally stated the piece of writing they intended to work on that day, and the step of the writing process they were working on. This process held the students accountable to their work, and also helped me keep track of my students’ progress. As the students were working, I continually moved throughout the room to assist and confer as needed.

There is a major focus on peer collaboration and feedback in my classroom and my students had many opportunities to work together. The students had assigned “writing partners” who they worked with on a weekly basis, but all students were able to confer and assist each other as needed. Students also worked together to edit and revise, to co-author stories, and to troubleshoot when there were computer problems. Nearly every day, we found time for students to share their work through the use of

the “Author’s Chair”, and they received suggestions and criticisms from the class (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). The students were proud of the work they were doing and enjoyed sharing it with their peers. In addition, throughout the year, I heard the students’ praise and suggestions become more insightful and thought-provoking. My students not only became better writers, but more thoughtful and helpful critics as well. I believe that the classroom environment has enabled students to take more risks in their writing and to feel more confident as writers.

Several times throughout the year we had an Author Celebration (Calkins, 1986) to share the students’ completed work with their peers, friends, and families. Our classroom became a stage, and each writer was able to share the pieces he or she had most recently completed, as well as the drafting pages, to illustrate the work that went into the finished piece. Although I looked for signs of progress on a daily basis, it was really during these celebrations that the students’ growth was most apparent. They confidently discussed the writing process they went through, they loudly and clearly read their writing pieces, and they were excited to share ideas for upcoming pieces. I attributed these characteristics to the workshop model. Because we built a community that talked about writing, shared writing, and wrote every day, my students were metacognitively thinking and talking about themselves as writers, and were proud to share those insights, as well as their finished products, with everyone.

Technology in Elementary Classrooms

Information and Computer Technologies

Technology is becoming more prevalent in schools, and teachers and researchers are striving to find the most effective and beneficial ways of incorporating it into writing classrooms (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Gill, 2007; Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Schuh & Farrell, 2008; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007; Warren, Dondlinger, & Barab, 2008). Information and communication technologies, also known as “ICTs” (Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007), can greatly improve the education of today’s students. These technologies include computers, software, and the Internet, and can open a new realm of possibilities to students including new formats for writing, new publishing options, and a chance to integrate text, image, and audio (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007).

Many factors contribute to a teacher’s decision to incorporate computers into the educational program, including teacher comfort and the needs of the students (Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). In order for teachers to be effective in integrating ICTs, they must feel confident in shifting their role from that of a teacher to more of a facilitator (Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). Additionally, there appears to be a discrepancy between the theory and reality of ICTs in the classroom, implying that teachers need more education in order to successfully educate their students about these new technologies (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Many teachers would like to

incorporate technology, but feel underprepared or unconfident in their ability to do so (Edwards-Groves, 2011). However, when teachers can effectively integrate ICTs into their writing classrooms, the dynamic shifts and the classrooms become more collaborative and productive (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). Word processing programs, visual learning software, and the use of the Internet have all been shown to have positive results for the students when incorporated into a writing classroom (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Schuh & Farrell, 2008; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007; Warren, Dondlinger, & Barab, 2008).

Computer Programs

One of the most common ways to incorporate computers is through the use of word processing software, such as Microsoft Word. In their 2007 study, Van Leeuwen & Gabriel observed grade one students in Canada to develop a better understanding of how the students used word processing software, and the overall effects of incorporating ICTs into the classroom. The researchers observed the students for approximately an hour every three weeks, and interviewed four students. While using word processing software to type written work, the primary students learned to take risks, apply their new knowledge of the software to their work, and help to coach their peers (Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). The students were more engaged and motivated to write, and stated that they enjoyed using the computer for writing. Van Leeuwen & Gabriel (2007) also noted that the collaboration between

peers, and between students and teachers, was a natural extension of the environment that had been established in the writing workshop.

Researchers have also found that using word processing software can help make revising and editing easier for young writers (Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007). In their informational article, Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry (2007) explained that programs such as Inspiration or Kidspiration can help students generate ideas and form a plan before writing, and word processing programs can alleviate the need for young writers to rewrite while revising. These programs can make publishing more efficient and creative for young writers (Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007). However, Van Leeuwen & Gabriel (2007) found that because the craft of revision was so much more efficient with a computer, the students in their study often wrote without a plan. In both studies, the students used the computers to make revising almost a seamless part of drafting.

Programs such as Kidspiration can be used to teach about specific writing skills or word features (Gill, 2007; Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry, 2007). In her article, Gill (2007) outlined potential uses for the Kidspiration program in the classroom. This program, with its emphasis on color graphics and animation, can help students expand their vocabularies (Gill, 2007) and easily shift between prewriting with a graphic organizer and writing text (Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski, & Henry, 2007). Gill also noted that after students use the features of Kidspiration to make word webs or graphic organizers, the products can be exported into programs such as Microsoft

Word or Microsoft PowerPoint (Gill, 2007). This collaboration between programs can help students move easily between the prewriting and drafting stages of writing while continuing to use the computer.

When students are engaged and actively involved in their writing, they will be more motivated to write (Calkins, 1986). Additionally, when students are given authentic opportunities to write, their pieces are more meaningful and personal (Calkins, 1986). Many researchers (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Schuh & Farrell, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007; Warren, et al., 2008) have found that incorporating technology can foster the same qualities in student writing. Schuh & Farrell (2006) and Warren, Dondlinger & Barab (2008), both studied the incorporation of a specific use of technology into the classrooms. In Schuh and Farrell's study, 56 fifth-grade students used the Internet to do research for expository writing. Through the use of a survey, the researchers found that the students preferred using the Internet to traditional methods of research (reference and trade books) and the students perceived that they had put more effort into their writing as a result. Warren, Dondlinger & Barab (2008) gave pre- and post-tests to 44 fourth-graders, half of whom tried using a digital learning environment (computer program) focused on encouraging new writing tasks. The researchers determined that the fourth graders who tried the digital learning environment engaged in more free-choice writing tasks than the students who did not. Regardless of the structure of the writing block in these classrooms, when ICTs were integrated, students were motivated and felt capable of completing

the tasks set before them, (Schuh & Farrell, 2006; Warren et al., 2008), more so than before the incorporation of these methods.

In My Classroom

Computers are often used in primary classrooms for publishing written stories, which is the last, optional step of the writing process. Using computers for publishing has not only motivated my students, but inspired their creativity and challenged their beliefs about the writing process. Although they used to see the writing process as a series of separate steps, while working on the computer, my students realized how much editing and revising was required to turn their written words into a digital text. My students authentically tried and failed many times when attempting new computer functions, but they became more conscientious users as a result. Trying to resize a picture, trying to replace a title with a different font – these are skills that my students have discovered and mastered on their own. I could have introduced my students to a wide variety of computer programs, but I opted to deepen their knowledge of just a few.

Based on my students and my research, I chose to incorporate just three computer programs into this study – Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration. Each of these programs has shown to increase interest and motivation in students (Gill, 2007; Schuh & Farrell, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007; Warren et al., 2008) and I sought similar results from my students. Unlike many of these studies, however, I did not just use the computer programs as a way to begin or end

the writing that my students would normally do. Instead, I tried to utilize the programs to help my students create new texts that reflected their knowledge of the possibilities of the programs. I explicitly taught my students the major functions of the programs (adding text, adding images, editing writing, etc) and provided ample opportunities for them to practice their skills throughout the school year. This study enabled me to see which students mastered those functions and were able to apply the knowledge of the programs to a new task.

Digital Literacy

Merchant (2007) defined digital literacy as “written or symbolic representation that is mediated by new technology” (p. 121). As opposed to using computers to type stories, researchers have found that digital literacy focuses on new, interactive and often non-linear texts (Borawski, 2009; Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007). Modeled after Web sites, these new texts combine text, graphics, color, animation and a nonlinear path to navigate through the content (Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007).

Students can use this structure to elevate their writing in a variety of ways. For example, in their three case studies, Kervin and Mantei (2009) studied three primary classrooms in Australia for over two months. The researchers observed different ways that teachers incorporated computers into their writing activities. Students in grade one used Microsoft PowerPoint to create nonlinear texts about toys; students in grade

four used the Internet and Microsoft Word to create texts about personal interests; and students in grade five used Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint to create picture books (Kervin & Mantei, 2009). In all three cases, the researchers found that the teachers authentically used the technology to support learning, created tasks that were developmentally appropriate for the students, and taught explicit skills about the programs as they were needed to support the students. As a result, the students were engaged, collaborative, and proud of the work they accomplished (Kervin & Mantei, 2009). The researchers were clear that the teachers did not force isolated technology into the classroom; instead, they used it to support and enhance the learning that was already taking place.

Edwards-Groves (2011) also champions the use of non-linear digital texts to promote new creativities in student writing. In the two case studies she reported, Edwards-Groves (2011) worked with a total of 17 teachers in six different schools (12 teachers from five schools, and five teachers from a single school) to explore writing in primary classrooms. The teachers met with Edwards-Groves in their separate groups 16 times over the course of a school year to discuss incorporating technology (computer programs) into their writing classrooms. Edwards-Groves (2011) found that it was imperative that students be provided with authentic tasks (such as presentations to educate kindergarten students), an audience and purpose to write for, and time to explore the programs. The teachers in the study also realized that literacy instruction and explicit technology instruction took place simultaneously, which was necessary to support the students (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009).

Additionally, in the majority of the case studies reported, peer conversation and collaboration played a significant role in the students' success (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009).

When computer skills are taught in isolation, they may not be as beneficial to the students as when the skill instruction is coupled with an authentic task (Borawski, 2009, Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007), but it is imperative that the skills are taught. Both Merchant (2007) and Borawski (2009) outlined specific aspects of digital literacy that are of most importance for teachers. In his 2007 article, Merchant examined the different concepts of digital literacy, explored opportunities for future research, and discussed the changes that are occurring in literacy due to the incorporation of new technologies, such as computer programs and the Internet. Merchant (2007) stated that teachers need to develop tasks that combine the multimodality of computer programs with the importance of writing, rethink how technology is being used by young writers, and provide students with more access to computers.

In a similar article discussing new literacy in a digital era, Borawski (2009) recommended that teachers include instruction for students in troubleshooting the computer programs, think about the purpose for using the program, and explicitly teach the uses of common tools and functions. Merchant (2007) very succinctly reminds teachers that there is "plenty to be done if we are to prepare children and young people to play an active and critical role in the digital future" (p. 127).

In My Classroom

Researchers have found that teachers are trying to get their students to utilize computer programs in new ways (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009), however, the teachers in most studies still gave their students a predetermined task coupled with a computer program. I wanted my students to become more critical users of computer programs, and therefore, took my study one step further. I taught my students explicit functions of the three programs they could be using and provided them opportunities to use the programs for smaller, authentic tasks, such as creating invitations or sharing research.

In this study, I invited my students to select the computer program they felt would be most effective for presenting their written work. By doing so, I was able to see if they understood the uses for different programs, and were able to make critical decisions about how to best utilize them.

Donald Graves (1983) began his book, *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work*, by reminding us that “children want to write...The child’s marks say, ‘I am’” (p. 3). In the three decades that have followed the publication of Graves’ book, those statements have remained true, and grown increasingly profound as students write in new ways. The ability to effectively use computers and the ability to create new digital texts are two skills that today’s generation of students need (Borawski, 2009, Merchant, 2007). These students, the “Net Gen”, (Kervin & Mantei, 2009, Merchant, 2007) come to school with a broad range of technological abilities and skills, and it is

my responsibility to help my students expand both their skills and their thinking about digital literacy.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of incorporating Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration into a second grade writing workshop. I examined both the student's engagement and proficiency with the computer programs, and the quality of writing that they produce.

Research Questions

I researched the following questions:

- In what ways does the use of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration affect my second graders' engagement in the writing process?
- How is the quality of my second graders' writing development and abilities affected by the incorporation of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration into writing workshop?

Participants

The participants in this study were the twenty students (ten girls and ten boys) in my inclusive second grade class during the 2010-2011 school year. They were ages seven and eight. The students were from middle-class and lower middle-class homes with varying family structures. The students were primarily Caucasian, with one Hispanic student and one African-American student. The racial demographics of my class were consistent with the racial demographics of the elementary school as a

whole. Since it was an inclusive classroom, there were a range of abilities in our class. Three of the students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and were in a self-contained 8:1:1 classroom for half of the day. In addition, one student had an IEP and remained in our classroom all day, and two students had individualized behavior plans. Many students were reading and writing at least two grade levels above an average second grade level and several students were reading and writing one to two grade levels below. The makeup of the class provided me with a wide range of learners.

The K-12 school is located in a rural town in western New York. There are approximately 400 students enrolled in the elementary school, most from a poor or middle class background. In the school, 21% (190 students) receive a free lunch, and 5% (42 students) receive a reduced-price lunch. In addition, the school received Title 1 Part A funding.

I chose to work with my second grade students because they had been using different forms of technology throughout the year, and had the necessary background skills for this study. I ensured the confidentiality of all the participants through the use of pseudonyms.

Context of the Study

In my classroom, we used the workshop idea of instruction and learning as much as possible, including the writing workshop. All of our students participated in the writing workshop, for approximately 45 minutes each day, right after lunch. The

workshop started with either a minilesson, which involved me explicitly teaching or modeling a skill that was applicable to the writing piece we were working on, or a more informal “status of the class”, where the students were responsible for stating the title of their piece of writing and the step in the writing process they were on that day. The students then worked for 15-25 minutes, depending on the day, and several days of the week we ended with “Author’s Chair”, a chance for two students to share the work they completed that day and receive feedback from their peers.

Our writing workshop varied slightly from the traditional structure, as defined by Lucy Calkins (1986), which includes a minilesson, work time, and sharing time, and allows for student choice in their piece of writing. We followed the aforementioned structure, although sharing occurred a few times a week as opposed to every day. The major difference was the amount of student choice. My students were required to complete five writing pieces throughout the school year. As a class, we began these pieces together, and the students worked through the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and occasionally publishing) at their own pace. When a student finished the required piece, he/she had the choice of a new project until it was time for the whole class to start the next required piece. Traditionally, this system has helped the students to complete the required pieces, as well as several pieces of choice, throughout the year.

My teaching assistant was in our room every day during writing workshop. She provided instruction to students, and occasionally taught a writing minilesson. We were both available to confer with students during the writing workshop, and

were equally responsible for management. During my observation periods, my teaching assistant frequently assumed the role of “lead teacher” in our classroom, in order to allow me to better observe the student participants. Since my teaching assistant and I have shared these roles all year, it did not affect the instruction for the students.

We utilized technology in the writing workshop throughout the school year. I began by explicitly teaching my students some basic computer functions, including logging on to the computer, opening a document, and saving work. I provided explicit computer instruction in our school’s computer lab a few times each month, and our focus was on a new skill or a new program each time. I allowed my students ample time to work and try the function or program during our computer time, and then they used the skills as needed in our classroom. After seven months of school, at the beginning of this study, my students were proficient in the basic functions of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Kidspiration and using the Internet.

My Positionality as the Researcher

I am a twenty-six year old Caucasian female, living in a city near the school district in which I work. I grew up in a middle class town, with two parents who were teachers. I completed my undergraduate education at a well known teaching college, and graduated with honors. Currently, I am in my last year of graduate studies for a master’s degree as a literacy specialist. I also recently finished my fourth year of

teaching second grade, of which three of the years have been in an inclusive classroom. I have a New York State initial certification for grades one through six.

I bring youth and energy to my classroom, and believe in giving students lots of choice, freedom, and movement. As was stated earlier, I believe in the workshop model of instruction. I have the same high expectations for all of my students, and then provide them with the level of support and amount of time needed to complete the task, modifying if necessary. In an inclusive classroom, there typically is a wide range of skills and abilities, but I believe that all students can and will be successful. I pride myself on helping my students become independent and confident learners, and I strive to connect their interests to our curriculum.

Throughout my teaching career, I have been utilizing and adapting the writing workshop structure. I continue to try to find the most effective balance between guiding my students and letting them create their own learning. I also have been informally investigating the use of technology in my classroom and in the writing workshop. I am fortunate to have a SMARTBoard and four student computers in my room, and my technology instruction varies yearly, depending on the students' interests and needs. This year, my students were incredibly interested in using the computers, and they were quick to pick up new skills and try new functions. Because of their enthusiasm, my current technology curriculum is more focused and explicit – teaching skills like saving a document or inserting pictures – than it has been in the past.

In addition to my work in the classroom, I am a member of my school's committee to create and implement technology curriculum at the elementary grade levels, and have also held a professional development workshop on the subject. As a result of a new master schedule, each classroom teacher has dedicated time in our school's computer lab. In an ongoing professional development series, I held a workshop on the "technology workshop", an idea based on the "Internet Workshop" (Leu, 2002). Leu's workshop consists of four parts: locating a website for students to use, designing an activity for them to accomplish with the website, having students complete the activity, and then sharing their results, questions, and insights (Leu, 2002). In my modified structure, I model a specific skill for the students (such as inserting clip art or setting a PowerPoint background), the students try it themselves, and then share both the process they went through (and any troubleshooting that had to be done) as well as the product they created. I use this structure during my own computer time, and have found it to be very successful.

Data Collection

I used three main research techniques in my study: observations, interviews, and analyzing each student's final writing project, informally and with the predetermined rubric.

Observations

I observed my students in two settings: during their daily writing workshop time and during our dedicated class time in the computer lab, which occurred four times throughout the study. During the observations, I took notes (see Appendix A) including, but not limited to, the student's ability to work independently, use of teacher and peer assistance, and use of the computer program.

Because I was fortunate to have two other adults present in the room during the writing workshop time, I was able to focus and take notes on individual students every day. I kept these notes in a notebook throughout the study. These notes also helped me select the students to focus on in my case studies.

Interviews

The second instrument I used to collect data was interviews with five students taken during the writing process, and again after they had finished their written project (see Appendix B). The interview data enabled me to gain insight into how my students felt about technology in general and the specific computer programs we were using. I was also interested in understanding their approaches to the writing process with the incorporation of the computer programs, and how it may be similar or different to the traditional writing process that does not include technology.

Student Writing Samples

I also analyzed the final writing pieces that my students produced through this study. I compared their project to the rubric (see Appendix C) that I created for this task, in order to determine to what extent my students met the expectations that were set out for them. I also informally analyzed the work in order to determine the quality of writing that was accomplished. Lastly, I determined if the students' choice of computer program was effective for achieving the goal of the writing project. I collected samples of the student work and included them in my final study.

Data Analysis

I used the interview data and writing samples to compile case studies for five students, representing a broad range of learners.

Observations

During my review of the observation data, I found patterns in the student's engagement with writing, engagement with the computer, and amount of independent work time. I used the observations when triangulating my data and forming the case studies of the selected students.

Interviews

I transcribed the interviews verbatim in order to represent each student's thoughts accurately and honestly. I reread the transcripts, coding for patterns. I

identified remarks students made in regards to their attitudes and abilities as writers and as a computer users. I compared those statements with the student writing samples that were collected after the writing assignment was completed.

Student Writing Samples

I analyzed the writing samples through the use of a pre-determined rubric (see Appendix C), in order to determine the quality of the writing. After analyzing the student work, I compared the scores on their rubrics with their interviews. I was interested in seeing the connections that existed between the students who perceived themselves to be good writers or competent computer users, and the quality of the work they produced. Quality can be very subjective, and therefore, I analyzed the student writing samples in two ways. The first was through the use of the rubric, to determine to what extent my students met my expectations. The second was more informal – I looked at how effectively the student conveyed his/her information, the variety of sentence patterns, the use of the computer program, etc.

Time Schedule

I began data collection in May of the 2010-2011 school year. I observed my students daily during the writing workshop, as well as during their dedicated computer lab time, which occurred four times throughout the study. I interviewed a group of three students several times throughout the study, during and after the completion of their writing project. I analyzed the data and compiled the information

to produce several case studies. My work on the case studies will continued throughout the summer of 2011.

Procedures

Week One:

I introduced the writing assignment and the writing rubrics to my students. I observed them daily during their writing workshop time in our classroom and during their dedicated computer lab time.

Week Two:

I continued to conduct observations and began to identify three students that would accurately represent a range of abilities.

Week Three:

I continued the observations of my students. I also interviewed the three students that became case studies in my final thesis. The interviews were audio taped, and I transcribed them.

Week Four:

I continued observing the students and completing their interviews.

Week Five:

As the selected students begin to finish their writing piece, I analyzed the completed piece with a predetermined rubric. I compared relative scores and informally evaluated the quality of the work.

Week Six:

I conducted interviews with the three selected students, focusing on their finished piece of writing. I also began to compile the student data and work samples in order to create case studies of the students.

Week Seven and beyond:

I used the observations, interviews and student work data to create the case studies, looking for similar themes or patterns in student thought or process.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

I observed and interviewed my students for a period of six weeks. I observed them for approximately 125 minutes per week in our classroom during writing workshop, and additional periods of observation took place in the computer lab, approximately 30 minutes, four times throughout the study. I used anecdotal notes from both of these settings, along with interviews of three students and my analysis of the each student's final written work to triangulate my data. My second graders were the only participants in this study; however, I used the extra adult support of my teaching assistant to allow me to objectively observe the students during their time working. I took precautions to record my observations, transcribed conversations and anecdotal notes honestly, accurately and professionally. My interviews with students were audio taped and transcribed, and I verified any statements with the participant before quoting him or her in my final thesis.

I have included detailed descriptions of my participants and the research context in chapters one and three of this study, as well as the time frame for my study. The outcomes of the study are included in the final thesis. I presented my facts and findings in a straightforward, nonbiased way. The students participating in this study were not directly affected by the outcomes. The utility of this study is primarily to benefit me as a teacher and a researcher, and to influence my instructional practices related to computer technology and writing. Therefore, the outcomes of this study could have an impact on the future students that I teach.

Limitations

There are several limitations to my study. First, the writing project the students completed only displayed some of their writing skills and abilities. Other skills and knowledge related to the computer programs may not be displayed, or only seen in isolation. This study also did not encompass the background instruction the students had with all the computer programs, only their current levels of competency.

The students were all in my classroom, and all received the same instruction with the computer programs being used. All of the students are from the same school in western New York, and therefore, the data collected, and case studies compiled, will not reflect the knowledge and abilities of all second graders using Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration.

I was both the classroom teacher and the researcher during this study. Primary students can be apprehensive about giving honest responses, especially if they feel I

wouldn't like or wouldn't agree with a statement. I encouraged my students to be honest, but my position may affect the student responses that were gathered during the interview process.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate what happened when I incorporated Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration into my second grade writing workshop. During this study, I observed both the engagement of the students and the quality of writing they produced while using the aforementioned computer programs. I concentrated on observing and interviewing during the writing process, and I focused on engagement, writing development, and quality of work.

Throughout this study, I sought to answer two research questions: In what ways does the use of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint and Kidspiration affect my second graders' engagement in the writing process? How is the quality of my second graders' writing development and abilities affected by the incorporation of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration into writing workshop?

Each of the three students featured in my case studies present different attitudes and abilities toward writing. They were all students in my inclusive second grade class during the 2010-2011 school year. The school was located in a rural district. Two of the students were eight year old boys, and one was an eight year old girl. I have substituted pseudonyms for the students' real names in order to ensure their confidentiality.

For this study, I formally observed the students over a five week period in May and June of 2011. In addition to the formal observations, I am able to provide background information about each student that was gathered over the course of the school year. During the formal observation period, I met with each student several

times during writing workshop, and then at the end for an interview and evaluation of the published piece of writing.

In this chapter, I present the three individual students' case studies. After presenting each case study, I provide a cross-case analysis in which I make comparisons between and among the case studies. The case studies and the cross-case analysis supported my ability to answer my research questions.

Case Studies

Case Study: Matt

My Observations

Matt went through second grade with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. He was the first to ask for challenges in math, and upon quickly arriving at the correct answer, was excited for more. He organized teams for "ground volleyball," a game he invented during indoor playtime, and was first on the kickball field when we went outside for recess. Matt was always surrounded by friends, laughing and joking about bananas and the Buffalo Sabres. He read nearly two grade levels above a typically developing second grader, and loved trying to solve the *Encyclopedia Brown* mysteries (Sobol, 1982). Matt played a dual role in our classroom community, both as a leader and a class clown. As a result, he was often sought out by his peers as a buddy to work with and as an expert with whom to confer, especially when the questions were about math or computers.

I had to keep a close watch on Matt, though. If he wasn't surrounded by his peers during our writing workshop, he was usually trying to attract their attention from across the room. He often staked out his territory at the beginning of writing workshop – Matt liked to sit in the “teacher chair” at the kidney table on one side of the room. I often felt like he chose to work there for the same reason that I did – the ability to see everyone in the room at the same time. Matt enjoyed being around his friends and students often chose to work at the table with him, asking for help or joking around.

Although I considered Matt an above-average student, I have observed that writing was not his passion. Matt completed the task that was asked of him, but rarely showed any enthusiasm or excitement during writing workshop. His stories mirrored those of most second grade boys: they have a semblance of a plot, some “gross” or “weird” elements thrown in for an attempt at humor, and occasionally trail off without a clear ending. Prior to this study, Matt's second grade writing portfolio included a report on snakes, a story entitled *Space Mountain* (see Figure 4.1), a poem about sports and a three-sentence Thanksgiving piece about a classmate.

Figure 4.1: Matt's Personal Narrative - *Space Mountain*

SPACEMOUNTAIN

BY

First I waited in line for Space Mountain with my Dad in Disney World. I waited and waited until it was my turn. I was freaked out when I first stepped in the cart and then it started to get darker and darker until we went down the tunnel. I was really freaked out!! I saw Jupiter, Neptune, and this green planet. That's why it's called Space Mountain. When I got back I was not scared anymore. I was glad it was over. I was full of EXITEMENT!!

IT WAS AWESOME!!

Matt wrote *Space Mountain* in February of the 2010-2011 school year, as his "personal narrative," a piece of writing mandated by the second grade curriculum. Matt worked on the piece for about three weeks, quickly completing each step of the writing process. Matt did some revising and editing, such as adding in the names of people and planets. I didn't give Matt, or any of the students, much guidance through the writing process for this piece, as it was meant to demonstrate each student's independent capabilities as a writer. This is an example of what I believe is average second grade writing. The piece has a beginning, middle and end, and Matt chose some words, like "freaked out" or "awesome" to capture the excitement of the day and the interest of a reader. After reviewing this piece, it was clear to me that Matt understood the conventions of writing and publishing a story, and therefore, was

ready to be supported in further developing and revising his ideas, which was the basis of the writing conferences I had with Matt during the second half of his second grade year.

Writing Workshop and Technology Workshop

My students worked diligently in writing workshop and in technology workshop all year and their development as readers, writers, and users of technology grew steadily. Our writing workshop was a 45 minute block of time each afternoon during which the students wrote independently, either on an assignment I had given or a free choice piece. Over the course of the school year, my students completed personal narratives, two informational texts, friendly letters to college pen pals and different types of poetry, including haiku, limerick, and free verse, all of which were mandated by the school curriculum. For free choice assignments, students wrote various fiction and nonfiction stories, letters, and poems. Matt, like most students, had a mix of assigned and free choice writing pieces in his portfolio.

Technology workshop was a 45 minute block of time in the computer lab that occurred every two weeks, and throughout the course of the school year my students learned about the different functions of various programs, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Kidspiration. The students often used the computer programs I taught them in technology workshop to publish the stories they wrote. I am a firm believer in both explicit instruction and time for exploration in elementary school. I provided explicit instruction about these computer programs, their functions,

and their uses. In addition, my students had many opportunities to explore the programs and become comfortable with using them before they had to use them for an assignment. My students were excited to go to the computer lab, and often wanted to stay in the lab after our time was over. It was two of my students, Matt and Timmy, who suggested I reserve the computer lab during writing time, so more students could work on publishing assigned pieces and to experiment with the programs and create free choice writing pieces. Therefore, as part of this study, I wanted to give my students the opportunity to choose their own method of publication for this last writing assignment.

Matt's Writing Process

Our last writing task of the school year, and the focus of this study, was a free choice assignment. I gave my students a list of the writing pieces they had published throughout the school year, and asked them to choose one title as a source of “inspiration” for a new, different story. After writing the new story, the students would use their knowledge of one of the three computer programs to publish their work. I was interested in then comparing the two finished pieces to see whether or how each student’s idea and writing quality had developed and/or improved. When I introduced the assignment and gave my students their lists of titles, Matt, like many other students, had a difficult time separating the title from the published piece. In hindsight, I can see how this could be challenging for my students given their age, their notion of concreteness, and their process of creating titles, which usually

happened at the end of the writing process. Matt was unable to find a new way to use a former title, without the two writing pieces being nearly identical. As a result of the difficulty many students were having, we took a new route, and just brainstormed ideas to write about. Matt's topics (see Figure 4.2) were mainly centered on things he knew a lot about, including sports and his new puppy.

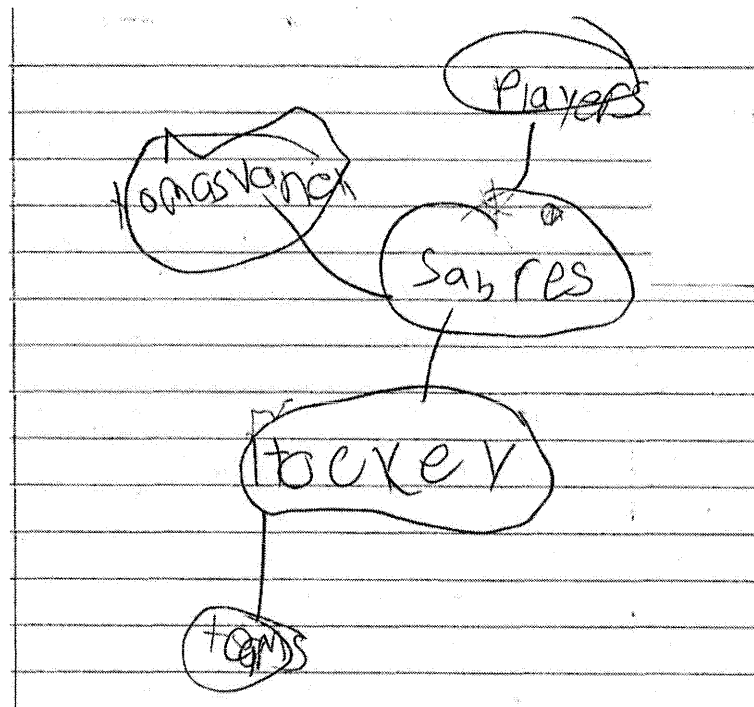
Figure 4.2: Matt's Brainstorming List of Topics

Fiction	Non Fiction
Sports	Sports
* Puppy	Puppy
TV	TV
Xbox	Xbox
* Hockey	

Matt was excited to “explode,” a term we used in our classroom for creating a concept web, his topic of hockey. Matt brainstormed everything he could think of that was connected to hockey (see Figure 4.3). As a three sport athlete (hockey being his choice during the winter), he had lots of background information from which to rely.

Matt worked on these brainstorming tasks, creating a list of fiction and nonfiction topics, and then choosing one to “explode”, with two of his friends at the kidney table. During the thirty minute work period, they needed more than six reminders from me to work in a quiet voice. During the second prewriting day, I separated the group because their humor and jokes had begun to interfere with their work. Matt was left alone to work at the kidney table.

Figure 4.3: Matt’s “Explosion” of Hockey



When I conferred with Matt almost a week later, he stated he was ready for the final revision of his story and to move on to publishing. In the writing process framework that my students follow, prewriting, drafting, peer revising and editing should all be completed before meeting to formally revise with either me or my teaching assistant. When I asked Matt about his prewriting (my students have several

graphic organizers to choose from during this stage of the writing process), he simply said, “Oops.” Matt had skipped this step and begun drafting his story (see Figure 4.4) – not uncommon for him, as he liked to get his writing assignments finished as quickly as possible. Matt and I met to revise many times over the next two weeks to improve several parts of his story, including puppies that run onto the hockey rink (but then disappear), a description of the characters, and the ending. Matt had almost no ending to his story, just an abrupt stop. When I questioned Matt about the ending, he replied that he “thought of it really quickly.” I encouraged Matt to take the time to think of a more substantial ending, and he agreed to try. We met on nearly a daily basis throughout that week to confer about his story. Matt was eager to begin publishing and was more willing to put in the work needed to get to that step.

Figure 4.4: Matt’s First Draft of *The Greatest Game in History*

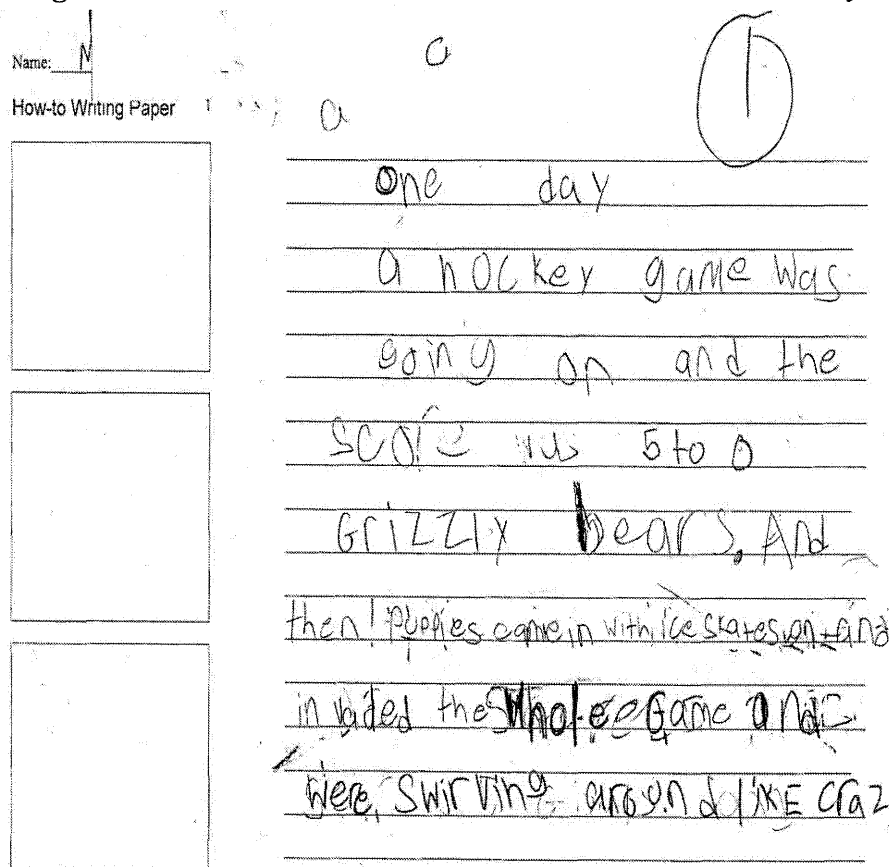
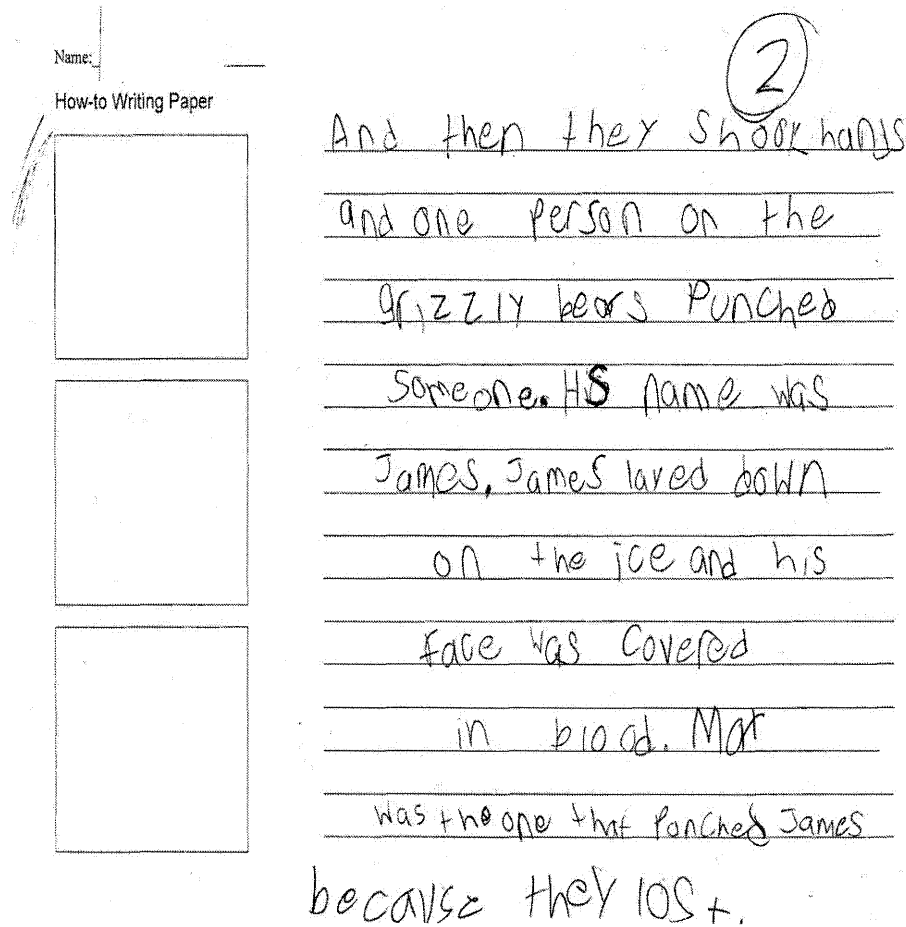


Figure 4.4 (cont.): Matt's First Draft of *The Greatest Game in History*



After all the revisions and edits had been made, Matt decided to publish his story using Microsoft Word, a program with which he was very familiar. Later, when I asked Matt why he chose that program, he stated that he “thought it would be the best program to do my story on.” I asked Matt to further explain his statement, but he could not, saying “I don’t know... it’s just the best for my story.” Matt began using one of the computers in our classroom, and I observed that he was noticeably more focused and engaged in his work. After stating he was “publishing *The Greatest Game in History*” at the beginning of writing workshop, Matt would take his folder

and quickly log on to the computer. I noticed that he chatted and joked around with his friends much less often than when he was working at the kidney table. In contrast to the lengthy conferences we had had the previous five weeks, I only checked Matt's status at the beginning and end of the writing workshop while he was in the publishing phase of the writing process. He made progress each day, and only left his computer to help other students with technical difficulties, such as demonstrating how to use the typing function of Kidspiration to Timmy.

Near the end of completing the writing assignment, I conferenced with Matt before he printed the final draft (see Figure 4.5) of *The Greatest Game in History*, the title he decided upon. When I asked Matt about his reasons for choosing the title, he shrugged and said "I don't know." I sat at the computer with him, and saw that after six days of work, he had made several changes to his story. Visually, he had chosen to change the font of his story, as well as the size of the word "guilty," for emphasis. I pointed out this change, and Matt explained that "the judge is saying it loud so you know it's serious." Matt had also decided to change some of the details about the puppies, although he didn't explain what he did or why he decided to make the changes. Matt told me he had put in, but then taken out clip art pictures, "so it would look more like a chapter book." I asked Matt if he had made any other revisions using the program, and he replied that he "changed some words because it sounded better" and he had to "fix some words that were wrong." Although Matt had been hesitant to revise his handwritten stories, he was seamlessly editing and revising while working on the computer

Figure 4.5: Matt's Final Draft of *The Greatest Game in History*

The greatest game in history

One day a hockey game was going on and the score was 5-0 grizzly bears. And then puppies with ice skates on and invaded the whole game and were Swerving around like crazy and scored 5 goals for the blizzards. And then overtime! The puppies got kicked out. And the blizzards scored. And then they shook hands and one person on the grizzly bears

Punched someone. His name was James. James laid down on the ice and his face was covered in blood. Max was the one that punched James because they lost. They called 911 and said"

911 we have a person with blood all over his face and we need you". They came. And they put him in the truck and drove him to the hospital and needed a new face. Max went to court.

*And they called him **GUILTY!!***

Judge Chris called max guilty. Max went to jail for 1 year. James lived with his new face and mommy happily ever after.

Matt was proud of his story. In his interview on June 2, 2011, he stated that he felt that writing was “easy because you can write anything and it can be a story,” and that using the computer made his writing better, because “you just need to type it down.” When I asked him to explain, he said that he felt typing was “easier than writing.” I asked Matt to say a bit more, and he repeated his sentence, “It’s easier than writing,” while making a writing motion with his hand. I pointed out that he had just typed a story previously written by hand, and he laughed, but commented that he would “rather just type.”

Evaluation

After he finished publishing his story, Matt and I both evaluated his story using the rubric I created for this study (see Figure 4.6). Matt gave himself an overall score of 10 out of 12, and I gave him a 9 out of 12.

Figure 4.6: Matt’s Rubric

Appendix C

“Something Old, Something New” Writing Rubric

Name: _____

Title (fiction): The Greatest Game in History

I used: Microsoft Word

Microsoft PowerPoint

Kidspiration

	Just Beginning ☹	Getting Better ☹ ☹	I Can Do It! ☹ ☹ ☹	I gave myself... ☹ ☹	My teacher gave me... ☹ ☹
Content	My story isn't clear to a reader and I didn't use any details.	My story makes sense to a reader and has some details.	I have lots of great details and my story really hooks a reader!	☹ ☹	☹ ☹
Word Choice and Sentences	I only picked a few interesting words and have simple sentences.	I picked some interesting words and used different sentences.	I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences.	☹ ☹	☹ ☹
COPS	My editing needs lots of work.	I only did some editing.	My editing is all correct.	☹ ☹ ☹	☹ ☹
Presentation	My story isn't clear with this computer program. It doesn't make sense to the reader.	This program can be used for this story. It's a little confusing for a reader.	This program was a great choice for my story. It's really interesting to a reader!	☹ ☹ ☹	☹ ☹ ☹

10

9

Murawski 2011

Matt and I both gave “Getting Better” scores for his “Content” and “Word Choice and Sentences” sections. When we discussed the scores on the rubrics, Matt and I both agreed that while this story showed definite growth and progress from his previous pieces of writing, there was still room for improvement in those two areas. For the “Content” section of the rubric we discussed parts of his story that could be further developed, like the puppies and the implied trial. For “Word Choice and Sentences,” Matt and I looked at his sentences and discussed ways to refine his language, such as not starting with “and then” repeatedly. Matt and I disagreed on the “COPS” score – an acronym used in my classroom for editing (Capitalization, OK Spacing, Punctuation, and Spelling). Matt rated himself 3 out of 3, reflecting on the amount of work he put into editing. I rated him 2 out 3. While he did work hard, there were several editing errors including missing/misplaced punctuation, lack of quotation marks, and capitalization mistakes. Matt and I did agree on the rating for “Presentation”, though – a clear “I Can Do It!”

While discussing the rubric, Matt said that he thought “[Microsoft Word] would be the best program to do my story on”, and I agreed with his choice. I also commented to Matt that I thought he used his knowledge of the features well. He changed and resized his font from the standard Times New Roman size 12 to an italicized Arial Rounded Bold, size 14. Matt stated that he “liked the way the words looked” with the new font and larger point size. Matt began his story with an oversize capital letter (something often seen in children’s books), and used much larger letters to emphasize the word “guilty!!” at a high point in the story’s action. Matt also

commented that he was conscious of his choice to not include pictures, something he had previously liked to do with this program. He wanted it to “look more like a chapter book, not like a kid book.” I asked Matt to clarify the difference, and he replied that a “kid book has lots of pictures...chapter books just have words mostly.”

I was pleased with both Matt’s self-assessment of his writing and the honesty in our conversation. He was thoughtful, agreeing that there was room for improvement in the “Word Choice and Sentences” and “COPS” sections of the rubric. Several other students in the class rated themselves highly on the rubrics without taking the time to look for areas for improvement, which I feel Matt did.

My Reflections

Matt as a Writer

Looking back over the school year, I recognize that Matt often had a hard time settling in and working during writing workshop, most likely due to the informal nature of the activity. The students were free to confer, collaborate and discuss their work with one another, but for a student like Matt, who did not find the writing process particularly engaging, this often became a social hour. Matt is a polite student, who would never explicitly state his disinterest in writing. I noticed that he showed it in other ways throughout the year, though. Whenever students had free time in my classroom, they could choose to read or write, and I don’t recall Matt ever choosing to write. His writer’s notebook only had a few pages filled with required entries.

In the context of the classroom, I believe that Matt saw writing in two different ways. He has had many experiences with traditional paper-and-pencil writing, and did not show much interest in doing it. In our writing workshop, Matt spent most of his paper-and-pencil writing time talking with his friends, disengaged from his work, until he realized he had to work on his writing in order to publish the story. In addition to typing, Matt experimented with digital writing using Microsoft PowerPoint and Kidspiration, and was much more engaged and excited about it. I saw throughout the year that when given the opportunity, Matt loved to type directly into the computer programs and experiment with the features – one of his favorite “pieces” was a Microsoft Word document with his name written in each “Word Art” design. It appeared that Matt enjoyed working with these computer programs and was proud of the products he was able to create. He shared his PowerPoint presentations with his friends and took many of his free choice stories home after our last Author Celebration.

Matt’s Role in the Classroom

It seemed to me that as soon as he began to use the computer Matt shifted from his “class clown” role to his “leadership” role. Once he began publishing, Matt became a proponent of Microsoft Word and an advisor of sorts to his peers. I witnessed a conversation between Matt, Timmy (who chose to publish using Kidspiration) and Nate, a student who had yet to begin publishing. Across the room from me, Matt was sitting in a computer chair, slowly spinning back and forth and

explaining to Nate, at the next table, why Microsoft Word would be the best program to use. Because I was across the room, I could only hear snippets of conversation and see Matt's animated gestures as he showed Nate the work he had done on the computer. Overhearing this from the next computer, Timmy leaned over to show Nate the work he had done using Kidspiration. The boys were interrupted by my teaching assistant, who came to help Nate with revising. In the end though, Matt won - Nate later chose to publish with Microsoft Word, and often sought out Matt's help.

While working on the classroom computers, Matt appeared to "oversee" the other students working: helping them log on, retrieving saved work, demonstrating new functions. When several students reached the publishing step, I took Matt's suggestion and reserved the library computer lab to accommodate all of the students. Matt led the group to the library and, after getting everyone else started, settled in at his own computer, apart from the other students. The librarian once commented to my teaching assistant that she was rarely approached for help during this time – my students simply asked Matt their questions, which he happily answered.

Matt's Use of Technology

I noticed that there was also shift in the classroom environment while Matt was publishing his story in the classroom. Previously, Matt had been sought after by his peers for jokes, conversation, and general goofing around, but while he was working at the computer, his peers rarely interrupted his work, and Matt almost never turned away from his computer screen. Any disengagement from his typing seemed

to be a result of another student needing help with his/her computer program.

Whenever I reminded a student to “ask a friend” for help with a computer program, more than half of the students asked Matt. Many others sought out his help without my prompting.

Matt had displayed his expertise with computers throughout the year; he was comfortable using a variety of computer programs, especially Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. During our technology workshops, he had been the first student to independently figure out how to use the Word Art function of Microsoft Word, and then taught many other students how to use it. In addition, he discovered the “animation” features of Microsoft PowerPoint, and demonstrated how to use those features to his peers so they could improve their PowerPoint presentation.

I agree with Van Leeuwen and Gabriel (2007), who found that the “use of a different tool – a computer with word-processing software – to complete a task traditionally completed with pencil and paper introduces a new realm of possible differences in attitudes [and] interactions” (p. 421). Matt always completed the work that had to be done during writing time, but when he knew he had the opportunity to publish (and usually revise and edit) with a computer program, he was much more interested in doing the writing itself. Each student published at least four required stories during the school year, and Matt published at least three more on his own. Matt also gravitated toward the computer programs for his free choice writing assignments. He liked to experiment with the features, but at the same time, he was completing the entire writing cycle almost unknowingly. Although Matt has never

stated it, I believe the time he spent learning about the computer program also improved his writing fluency and skills, and therefore, he was developing and growing as a writer. The stories he wrote as free choice pieces, and *The Greatest Game in History*, have ideas that are more fully developed than his *Space Mountain* story and also show improved word choice, sentence variety and flow, and conventions. Matt not only typed stories, but created PowerPoint presentations about different topics that interested him (such as sports) and Kidspiration documents full of text and images. Matt did not appear to take the physical, traditional task of writing very seriously, but when working with a computer program to complete a writing task he was considerably more focused and engaged.

Matt stated in his interview that he felt using Microsoft Word made his writing better, although it is not clear to me whether Matt saw the benefits of using a computer to improve the quality of his writing. He seemed to see writing and working on the computer as two separate things. Matt used the computer in writing primarily to publish the pieces that were assigned, but drafted, edited and revised directly onto the computer when he was working on a free choice task. In my opinion, the work Matt produced during his free choice time is of better quality than the work he had to complete during writer's workshop. His free choice stories often had more humor and silliness to them, which could make the plot confusing at times, but certainly showed his voice as a writer. I believe that Matt, like most students, was more engaged in his work when he had the opportunity to choose the topic to write about and had more control over the writing process. For free choice writing pieces, I was much more

flexible about the writing process, and Matt would typically brainstorm an idea and then head to the computer to publish. I observed that he would simultaneously draft, revise, and edit his writing while at the computer, and often spent more time working through those steps than when he had to use paper-and-pencil to complete the process. From my observations, it is unclear whether Matt understands how he could combine the two processes. I believe that because Matt is so comfortable with these computer programs, he will soon see how they can be used as part of his writing process. Matt stated during our interview that he uses technology at home, but “mostly to play game websites.” I asked Matt if he used the same programs at home that he does at school, but he said “No, mostly just the Internet.” Therefore, I believe Matt’s knowledge of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint and Kidspiration were developed during his time at school.

Conclusion

I watched Matt grow as a writer throughout the school year, and his final piece really shows the amount he has learned about writing, technology, and himself. During the writing workshop, he worked hard to make the necessary changes to improve the content of his story. Matt chose a familiar and interesting topic and tried to make it into a compelling story. Matt chose a program he was comfortable with, Microsoft Word, but also a program that helped make his story clear and visually appealing to a reader, which leads me to believe that he is beginning to understand the different purposes for using different software programs.

Matt was also thoughtful about the revisions and edits he made while publishing, and used his knowledge of the program's functions to make his story visually appealing, as well. At the end of May, Matt printed his story, retrieved it from the printer and stared at the pages for a few seconds (Research Journal, 05/31/11). He slowly walked back to me with his eyebrows furrowed and said "I'm sorry...I guess I hit the button twice." I took the pages from his hand and smiled. When I told Matt that his published story was two pages long, and he broke out into a smile before running to put the story in his portfolio.

Case Study: Beth

My Observations

Beth had a flair for drama. At our spring conference on March 24, 2011, Beth's mother and I were in tears laughing as she recalled a conversation two years earlier that six-year-old Beth had with her best friend, six-year-old Phil, in the back of the car.

Beth: Phil, do you remember when we met?

Phil: In kindergarten.

Beth: And Phil, do you remember the first thing I said to you?

Phil: ...Hi?

Beth. Yup... and do you remember the first thing you said to me?

Phil: ...Hi?

Beth: (with a deep sigh) Good times, Phil. Good times.

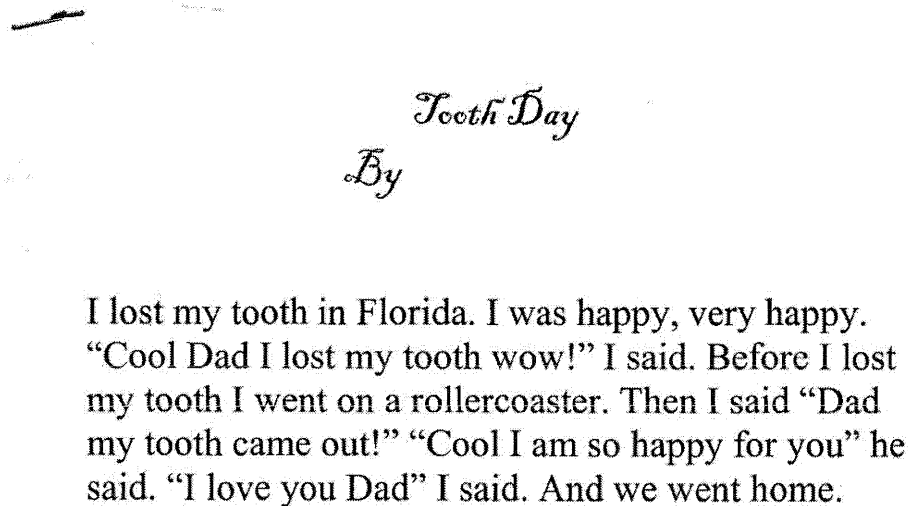
I observed that Beth marched to the beat of her own drum and was completely confident in her decisions and actions. She spent several months' worth of playtimes sitting on a stool in our supply corner (where we have shelves with baskets full of pens, pencils, sticky notes, scissors, tape, etc). After a few days, two signs were posted above the shelves: "Beth's Office" and "Open." Regardless of whether any patrons came to her office, Beth was there and busily working, day after day.

I also noticed that Beth's unique characteristics made her an inconsistent student. When she had the opportunity to create her own learning, she was excited, creative, and very open about what she was doing. Beth was a careful and thoughtful reader who worked hard to decode and understand challenging books, and enjoyed talking about them afterward. Beth also showed her artistic ability (she draws very impressive people and horses) and could appreciate and comment on the craft of other authors and artists, too. She spent weeks pouring over *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne (1998), discovering how the illustrations continually added layers of meaning to the text. But when we were working on a task that Beth didn't enjoy that much, such as math, she was quiet and withdrawn, with the occasional eye-roll thrown in. Beth was the most inconsistent in writing workshop. She varied between settling in quickly to work diligently on her assignment and finding a "quiet place to work" hidden behind a bookshelf to play tic-tac-toe with Phil. Despite the discrepancies in her demeanor and in her level of engagement with the academic task, Beth said that she "likes writing," and "that I can just come up with random ideas that are cool and

they turn out to be awesome stories.” Beth’s words revealed her as a confident writer, even if she doesn’t always appear to be an engaged writer.

Beth published a personal narrative in February of the 2010-2011 school year (see Figure 4.7). She developed the idea and worked through the writing process without much guidance or support from me. I wanted this piece to really show each student’s capabilities as an independent writer.

Figure 4.7: Beth’s Personal Narrative – *Tooth Day*



Beth worked on this story every day for about four weeks. The first two were spent “brainstorming” - mostly doodling and making lists in her writer’s notebook. I had to set a deadline for brainstorming in order to get Beth to choose a topic and move on to the drafting stage. After she decided on a topic, and completed some prewriting (making a storyboard of her story), the next two weeks were more productive. Beth was able to tell a complete story, although her sequence of events was a little disorganized. She also showed a great grasp on conventions, using capital

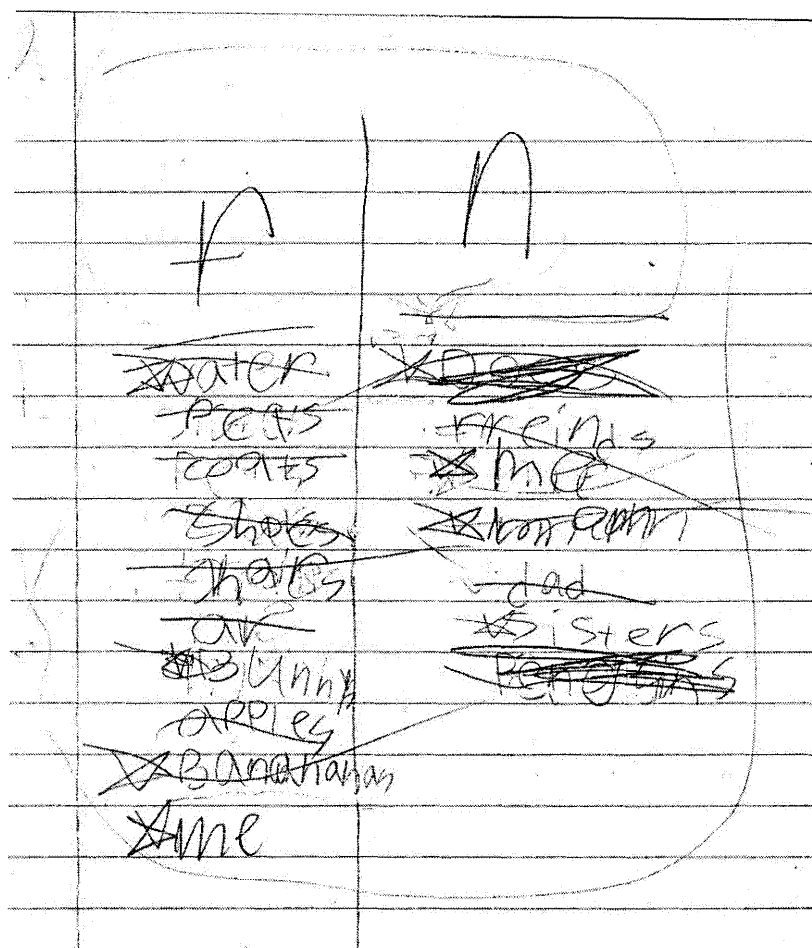
letters (for Florida) and quotations marks correctly. It was clear to me that Beth understood how to write a story; however, her published piece was simple and straightforward, and showed none of the sophisticated humor and drama that she typically displayed in conversations.

One morning, Beth walked up to me and dramatically collapsed her head onto my chest (Research Journal, 05/10/11). Without making eye contact, she said “It’s cruel. Life is cruel....” Beth then looked up, wide-eyed and somber, and finished her thought: “Sisters are cruel!” She immediately launched into a dramatic and humorous tale about something her older sister had done that morning (as this was a fairly regular rant, I don’t remember the specifics). Beth certainly understood drama, and could recognize it in other stories, but had yet to discover it in herself, as a writer.

Beth’s Writing Process

Beth began this writing assignment the way she began most tasks during writing workshop – under a table with her writer’s notebook. She quickly created a fiction and nonfiction list of ideas to choose from (see Figure 4.8), and settled on what was apparently a hot topic amongst my second graders at the time: bananas. This topic showed up on many students’ brainstorming lists, and they always giggled excitedly whenever a student mentioned the idea. Beth had lots of ideas on her lists, although only a few topics, including “bunny” and “bananas”, were starred, indicating that she wanted to explode those topics.

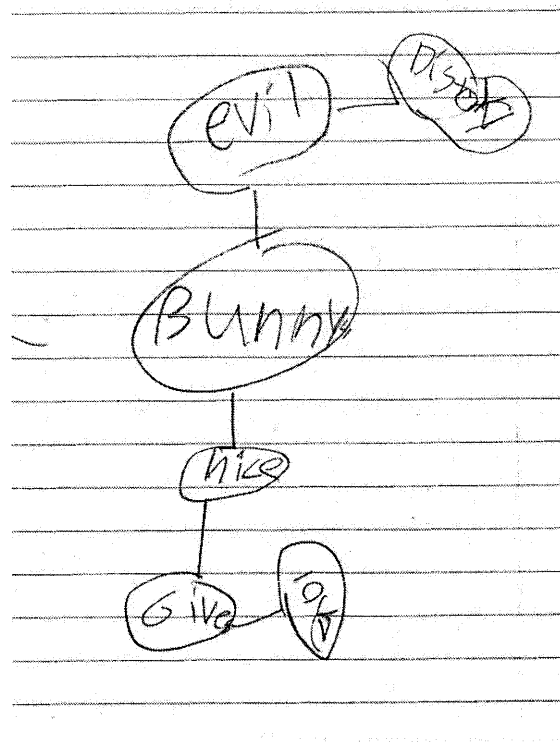
Figure 4.8: Beth's Brainstorming List of Topics



"I'm exploding bananas!" Beth confidently said to me as I walked by her during writing time two days later. Upon hearing that sentence, the students working in the reading corner with her burst into laughter. I never saw a completed concept web with that topic in the center; however, in a few days Beth and I met for an informal conference and she showed me the "explosion" of bunnies that she had created in her writer's notebook (see Figure 4.9). When I asked Beth about her change in topic, she simply said that "this one will be better" and didn't explain any

further. After Beth and I were finished, she met with her writing partner to share the concept map and further discuss story ideas. Although I wasn't able to hear their conversation, there was a significant amount of laughter.

Figure 4.9: Beth's "Explosion" of Bunnies



After Beth decided on the topic of bunnies, she started drafting her story. More than two weeks later, at the beginning of writing workshop, she still declared "Untitled, drafting" when I asked her what she was going to work on that day. Since this was typical of Beth, I didn't impose a deadline as I had a few months earlier, and let her continue working at her own pace. Beth and I met to formally revise her story on May 26, 2011. She told me she was "thinking about it" when I asked about a title, but did share that the story was about a "secret agent bunny." Beth read her story to

me in monotone voice, and I again noted the difference between Beth as a storyteller and Beth as a writer. I praised the plot and detail in her story, and encouraged her to keep thinking about revising to improve the content.

Figure 4.10: Beth's Untitled Draft

One day a little
girl found a little
bunny outside her door.
She picked him up
and ran inside. To her
mom. Her mom said she
can keep him. She raised
him to be very nice
and helpful. His secret
was that he is a secret
agent. One day the bunny
was let out side at 7:00 am
every morning and let back
inside at 8:00 am. ^{one day} He did not
COME BACK. ||||

Figure 4.10 (cont.): Beth's Untitled Draft

the
Then BUNNY was on the
street a rich lady found
the BUNNY she took
him home "By the way
the lady was nice" and
gave him food
The
end

I felt that this story showed a lot of growth and creativity from Beth. First, the story followed a plot (something she had been missing in *Tooth Day*), and it was an interesting idea. Many students in my class based their fictional stories on topics that other students have shared, but this was a new idea. I asked Beth during our conference if she planned to elaborate on what the bunny had been doing all day long, as that part of the story seemed to be missing. She gave me a withering look and said

“that part is going to be in the next story!” I didn’t want to dissuade her from creating a second story, so I agreed to let this story stand on its own.

Four days later, Beth began publishing using Microsoft Word. I asked her why she chose that particular program, and she said “Cause all my life I’ve been using Microsoft Word.” Beth worked for five days, 30 minutes a day, on her publishing, independently getting started and then working diligently during our writing workshop time. To my knowledge, Beth never asked for help, and was significantly less distracted then she had been while working on her prewriting and drafting. For the five days she was working on the computer, I never saw her leave or converse with any other student. Beth and I met again on June 7 so I could look over her final draft before she printed it (see Figure 4.11). Beth chose to create a cover for her “book” as a separate document, as well.

Figure 4.11: Beth’s Cover and Final Draft of *Secret Life*

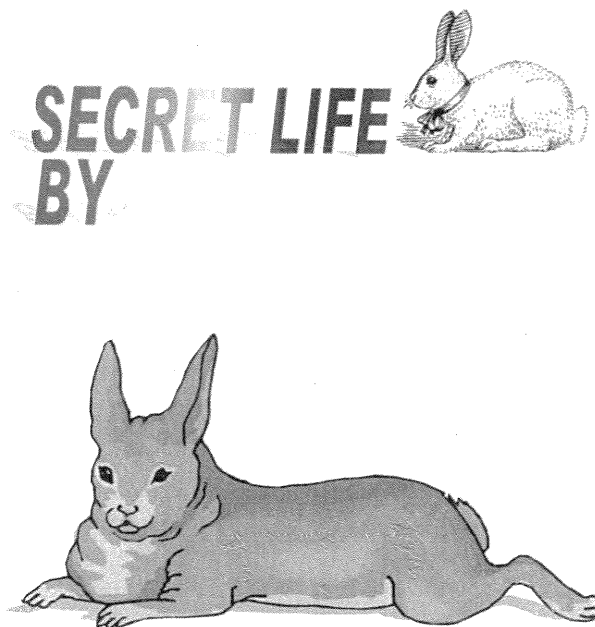


Figure 4.11 (cont.): Beth's Cover and Final Draft of *Secret Life*

One day a little girl found a little bunny outside her door . She picked him up and ran inside to her mom . her mom said can keep him . She raised him to be very nice and very helpful his secret was that he is a secret agent . The bunny was let outside at 7:00 and let back in side at 8:00 . one day the bunny DID NOT COME BACK!!!!!!!!!!!!. She talked to the cops the cops said well call a search the search went on for a week so the cops called oof the search because the cops thought the bunny was died . one day THE BUNNY CAME BACK!!!!!!!!!!!! the bunny still had his hat on . little girl went CRAZY . wall the little girl went CRAZY the bunny ran away . the bunny got so hungry he got hungry enough he ate out of the garbage can . then the bunny was on the street a rich lady . was nice and gave him food

THE END!!!!!!

It was clear immediately to me that Beth had made several changes to her story while working on the computer, both positive and negative. As a positive change, Beth appeared to have considered my suggestion about elaborating on the middle of the story. Instead of adding more information about the bunny, though, she took another perspective – that of the girl – and told her side of the story while the bunny was missing. Beth said she thought the inclusion of the search “is more exciting” but still “didn’t tell what the bunny was doing.” I thought this revision was very smart of Beth. She revised her story to make it more interesting to a reader while


still keeping the parts for the second story as a secret. It also appeared that while Beth was revising while publishing, she was not concentrating as hard on editing. Although the editing of her final draft was better than her first draft, there was still work to be done, such as placing the periods correctly and capitalizing the beginning words in each sentence.

Evaluation


After Beth printed her story, she and I both completed her rubric (she completed it during class, I filled in my scores after school), and we met the next day to discuss the results.

Figure 4.12: Beth's Rubric

Appendix C



"Something Old, Something New" Writing Rubric



Name: _____ Title (fiction): Secret Life

I used: Microsoft Word Microsoft PowerPoint Kidspiration

	Just Beginning ☹	Getting Better ☹☹	I Can Do It! ☹☹☹	I gave myself... ☹☹☹	My teacher gave me... ☹☹☹
Content	My story isn't clear to a reader and I didn't use any details.	My story makes sense to a reader and has some details.	I have lots of great details and my story really hooks a reader!	☹☹	☹☹☹
Word Choice and Sentences	I only picked a few interesting words and have simple sentences.	I picked some interesting words and used different sentences.	I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences.	☹☹☹	☹☹☹
COPS	My editing needs lots of work.	I only did some editing.	My editing is all correct.	☹☹☹	☹☹☹
Presentation	My story isn't clear with this computer program. It doesn't make sense to the reader.	This program can be used for this story. It's a little confusing for a reader.	This program was a great choice for my story. It's really interesting to a reader!	☹☹☹	☹☹☹

Beth and I both rated her story similarly; she gave her story an overall 10 out of 12, and I rated her story 9 out of 12. We both gave the same rating, 2 out of 3 (“Getting Better”), for the first two categories, “Content” and “Word Choice and Sentences.” Beth and I agreed that while this story had shown a lot of improvement both from her previous stories and even previous drafts of *Secret Life*, there was still room for growth. Beth stated that in her next story, she wanted to “get better at telling what the bunny is doing” and “make it even more interesting.” I agreed that those were good ways to improve the content of a story. Beth couldn’t specify how she could get better in the “Word Choice and Sentences” category, so I suggested adding in dialogue, as opposed to just narrating the events of the story. Beth agreed to try in her next story. The only score Beth and I disagreed on was “COPS” – she gave a 3 out of 3, and I gave a 2 out of 3. Beth defended her work by saying she “worked hard on the computer to make it better,” and she also mentioned that she has “sloppy writing – it’s hard for me to make spaces on the paper and it’s better on the computer.” I agreed with both of her statements, but pointed out the incorrect punctuation and capitals, and Beth agreed that it was a place she could improve.

Beth and I both rated her story “I Can Do It!” in the “Presentation” category. It was clear to me from Beth’s finished piece that she understood how to use Microsoft Word to publish a story, and I told her that. Beth said she likes “typing cause all my life I’ve been using Microsoft Word.” She also stated that it can be frustrating, because “sometimes the computer messes up, sometimes pictures do weird stuff.” Beth was referring to the clip art she used on the cover, which she had

trouble manipulating to get it in the right place. Overall, though, it was clear that Beth used Microsoft Word both to revise and improve the content of her story, and to make her finished publication visually interesting to a reader.

My Reflections

Beth as a Writer

When I compare Beth's two published pieces, *Tooth Day* and *Secret Life*, I can see great improvement in the quality of her writing. First, Beth's sequence and plot of the story became clearer and more developed. She was no longer simply writing beginning-middle-end stories, but really developing an interesting plotline with several characters involved. Beth's use of time in *Secret Life* – "The bunny was let outside at 7:00 and let back in side at 8:00" and "the search went on for a week" – showed me that she is thinking about her characters and how this event would happen in reality. It is also clear that Beth intentionally left out some information, such as what the bunny does all day, to keep the reader interested and anticipating a second story.

Beth is beginning to show her voice and personality as a writer, which I think also comes through in *Secret Life*. In contrast to the simplistic details of *Tooth Day*, *Secret Life* is full of interesting characters and actions, which is more akin to how Beth tells stories aloud. I believe that Beth is also becoming more reflective as a writer. Most of the major revisions that were made to *Secret Life* happened while she was publishing on the computer. I was unable to discuss this with Beth, but I believe

that as she was typing she was continually rereading her story and naturally wanted to make it more interesting. Beth commented during our interview that she has “sloppy writing” and “it’s hard for me to make spaces.” This comment, paired with the revisions that were made on the computer and my observations of her written work from throughout the year, lead me to believe that it was more difficult for Beth to reread her own handwriting then to read what she typed at the computer. This could be a factor in her decision to add several sentences about the search while typing the story.

Beth’s Engagement in Writing

Beth’s engagement with writing and the writing process changed dramatically when she was able to use the computer. During paper-and-pencil writing, Beth was often hidden away from me, under a desk or behind a bookshelf, and while lots of stories were getting shared with Phil, her work was not always completed. I tried to maintain a casual and relaxed atmosphere in my classroom, but Beth often procrastinated with her writing for so long that I had to impose deadlines in order to be sure she would at least finish the writing pieces mandated by the school’s curriculum. Beth liked to tell stories, but she had trouble focusing on an idea and developing it into a written piece. When Beth did get work done, she was busy and focused, but that only happened a few times during any given writing project.

In hindsight, I realize the change in Beth’s engagement began near the end of her two week drafting period. She was ready for her name to be called during our

“Status of the Class” routine at the beginning of writing workshop, and answered with a quick “drafting, untitled” before scurrying off to work. Beth got settled into work much more quickly, and she began changing her seat – she came out from under or behind things, and settled in the reading corner with a clipboard. Beth occasionally still chatted with Phil, but during her last week of drafting, she was much more engaged in her writing and excited about the story she was creating.

The most noticeable change in Beth’s engagement occurred when she used the computer, though. She quickly answered “publishing, untitled” during “Status of the Class” and then hurried to log on to a computer. I rarely saw or heard from Beth while she was publishing. She was completely focused on the task at hand and worked independently to complete her story. When I stopped by her computer one day to check on her progress, Beth turned around and beamed. “Wait till you read this!” she exclaimed, and then quickly went back to work. It was clear to me that the more Beth worked on the computer, the more engaged and excited she was about her published piece. After reviewing her final publication, I realize that during that time she was doing much more than just typing her story. She was adding a new section about the search that wasn’t in her previous draft, and revising while she worked.

Beth’s Use of Technology

Beth’s use of Microsoft Word to publish her story certainly improved her engagement with the writing process, but it also improved the quality of her writing. Beth’s first draft of *Secret Life* was a good story, and showed lots of growth in Beth’s

development as a writer. However, her additions to the story during the publishing phase enhanced her story even more, and lead me to believe that Beth is becoming more confident and reflective as a writer.

Beth added the following section of her story while publishing:

She talked to the cops the cops said well call a search the search went
on for a week so the cops called oof the search because the cops
thought the bunny was died . one day THE BUNNY CAME

BACK!!!!!!!!!! the bunny still had his hat on . little girl went CRAZY .

In terms of content, this addition improves Beth's story in several ways. It develops a sense of time for the reader, who can now understand that the bunny was gone for a week, as opposed to a day, as the bunny was earlier in the story. Beth is showing the reader that something different is happening, without giving it away. I also believe the sentence "the bunny still had his hat on" is a great addition to the story. That simple sentence adds to the reader's curiosity about what the bunny was doing and where the bunny had gone, which will help the reader maintain interest and want to read the second story about the bunny.

Beth's editing abilities got lost in this new section, which I believe shows Beth's focus on the content of the additions. I think she was excited and interested in these new sentences, and was primarily focused on getting them typed, not checking to make sure the punctuation and capitals were correct. Although these sentences led to Beth receiving a lower score from me in the "COPS" section of her rubric, it is

important to note that these additions are also a major factor in my giving her a top rating in the “Content” section.

As a writing teacher, I find it difficult to balance content and conventions, especially if I am quantifying them on a rubric. I agree with Nauman, Stirling, and Borthwick (2011), who stated that “allowing students the freedom to use and play with as many words as possible is probably far more beneficial overall than making students conform to a particular writing style” (p. 326). While typing, Beth could much more clearly read what she had written, and I believe it was easier for her to make changes, both visually (including the cover page and making some words larger than others), and in the content of her piece. I am happier with Beth’s choice to use Microsoft Word as a format for revising and improving her story than I am concerned with her limited use of conventions.

I also believe that using Microsoft Word enabled Beth to reread her story more reflectively, and therefore, make the revisions she did. Van Leeuwen and Gabriel (2007) observed that “making changes with a word processor is easier, and writers count on the revision process to refine their work” (p. 426). I believe that this is how Beth felt about her writing process. She stated during our interview that she has “sloppy writing”, and from what I’ve seen of her writing throughout the year and on the first draft of *Secret Life*, it isn’t always easy to read. With the use of the word processing program, Beth could review her story with a critical eye and produce an interesting and unique story.

Conclusion

I believe that Beth grew and developed as writer this year, and her choice to use Microsoft Word for publishing enabled her to produce an interesting and funny story, much like the stories she had been telling aloud all year. She is beginning to understand how to incorporate her voice and personality into a story. While using the computer program, Beth was more focused and engaged with her work, thoughtful about developing her story, and visually creative when publishing. It's unfortunate that the year ended before Beth could write the next story about the bunny.

Case Study: Timmy

My Observations

The first time Timmy and I spoke was during his second grade orientation, the night before school started. He saw the addition and subtraction posters on the wall, walked over to me, and announced, "I can already do multiplication and division!" As it turns out, Timmy was right. He could complete his multiplication and division facts table, but had no idea how to apply them in a problem-solving situation. I found out during the course of the year that this was typical of Timmy. He could read every word in the *Diary of Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2007) series, but couldn't retell the story, answer questions about the characters, or discuss his favorite part. Timmy was the best speller in our second grade class, but his writing was below average.

Timmy prided himself on being first. He was the first student in line, the first to follow a direction, and the first to point out when someone else was not following

the direction. He also liked to be the first one done with all his assignments. I often observed that Timmy completed what was asked of him, but would do no more. He was proud of what he knew and could accomplish, but didn't seem to like to take risks for fear of making mistakes or being wrong. Timmy would quickly complete his math assignments, and when I would say "Great job, looks like you're ready for a challenge" he would politely reply, "No thanks." He had a similar attitude toward writing - Timmy liked to work fast and be done first. I believed he had great potential as a writer, but Timmy was more content with simply being the first one finished.

Timmy's personal narrative, published in February 2011, really captures him as a writer (see Figure 4.13). He told a simple story with a beginning, middle, and end, and some details, but didn't show much voice or personality as a writer. His sequence of events was unclear, so while a reader could understand the overall idea of the story, the details were confusing.

Figure 4.13: Timmy's Personal Narrative – *Great Wolf Lodge*

GREAT WOLF LODGE BY

I was driving to the Great Wolf Lodge water park. When I was there I checked in. My room was on the third floor. I went to my room then I went to my friend Noah's room. His room was right next door. I got my swimsuit on and we left early. We had to answer questions, if you got them right you got a coupon for a free pizza. I got one right and went to Pizza Hut Express. My trip was fun!!!

A few days after publishing *Great Wolf Lodge*, Timmy responded to our Status of the Class routine at the beginning of writing workshop with “*Books Come Alive*, drafting.” I had never heard this title from him before, and it seemed very different than Timmy’s typical topics in writing, which usually included the Buffalo Bills and the Buffalo Sabres. Over the next few months, in between assigned writing tasks, Timmy always went back to his *Books Come Alive* series. He wrote several “books” (usually one or two paragraphs each) about the different adventures of library books that came alive – in a pizza restaurant, in the school cafeteria, in his house. Timmy really enjoyed working on these books and took them home as soon as they were published, which is unfortunate as I don’t have any to include in this case study. It surprised me that Timmy took such an interest in writing fiction. As a reader he typically preferred nonfiction or realistic fiction, and until this series, most of his writing had been nonfiction, too. I was pleased to see Timmy taking a risk and working out of his comfort zone.

Timmy’s Writing Process

On the first day of this writing project, Timmy stated that he already had an idea, and didn’t “want to spend any time brainstorming.” I encouraged him to take some time to think about his topic, and he dutifully went to a table in the middle of the room. He had friends at that table, but disregarded them and focused for the next five minutes on generating his list (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14: Timmy's Brainstorming List

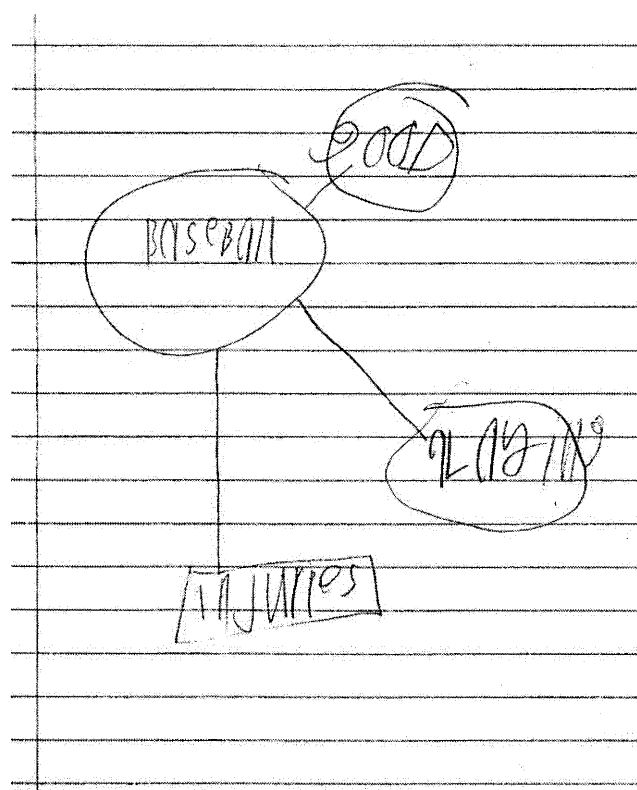
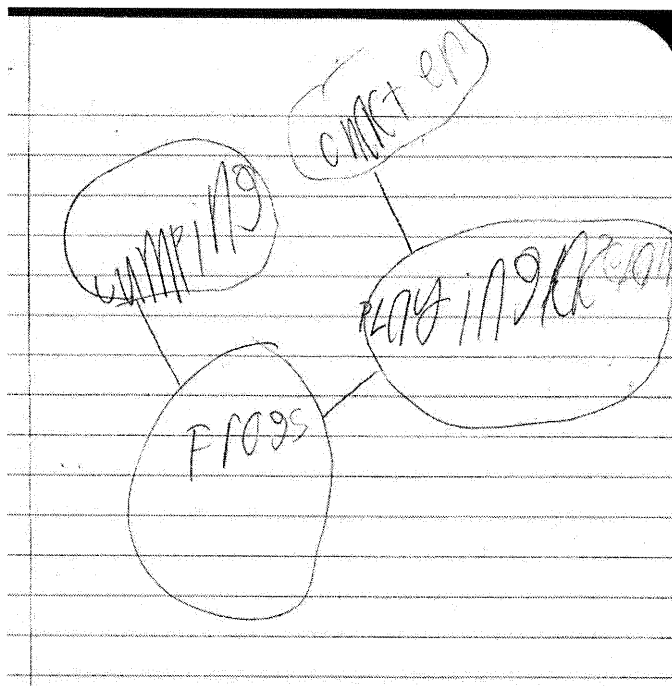
F	N F
* BASEBALL	
FOOTBALL	
HYMAN	
* FROGS	

Timmy's list was primarily comprised of things he knew a lot about, although it was interesting to me that he listed topics that are typically thought of as nonfiction, like baseball and frogs, but placed them in the "fiction" category. Given his interest with his earlier fictional book series, I wasn't surprised that Timmy was heading that direction again.

After Timmy quickly finished his list, he was ready to move on to the "explosion" part of brainstorming. He showed me his list, again repeated "I already know what I'm going to write about" and sat down with his writer's notebook. At the end of writing time that day, Timmy surprised me with two concept webs in his notebook (see Figure 4.15). He explained that he couldn't decide between baseball and frogs, so he was "going to write a story about frogs *and* baseball together." I thought that was a great idea, and told him so. Although it was clear from his list and

concept webs that Timmy didn't put a lot of effort into brainstorming, I was happy that he had an idea he was so committed to and so eager to write about.

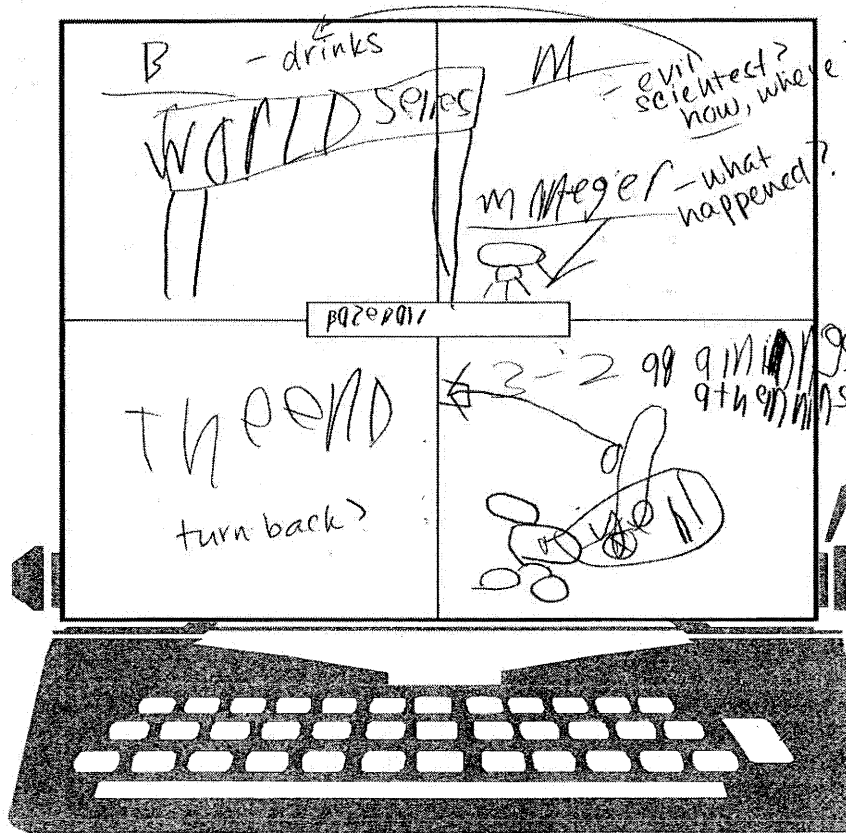
Figure 4.15: Timmy's "Explosions" of Frogs and Baseball



Timmy worked on his story for the next few days, and on May 11, we met for his first conference. My student have the option of several graphic organizers to use while prewriting, and since I introduced the “four-square planner” in the fall, Timmy has only used that one in writing. Timmy has mentioned that he likes it because he can “get ideas down fast,” and then spend the time during the conference telling the story.

That is exactly what happened at our first conference, on May 11, 2011. Timmy’s planner (see Figure 4.16) just had sketches on it depicting the beginning, middle, and end of the story. It was his oral telling of the story that led me to praise him again for his creative idea. He named it *Frog Series*, since, as he explained “it’s about frogs and like the world series.” It was a fairly original story, although I could see resemblance to the *Books Come Alive* series that he had been working on for the last few months. Both stories had characters that change (books come alive, baseball players become frogs), and this change leads to chaos in the environment. Because Timmy is typically a student who rushes through his work, I wanted him to slow down and really take some time on this story. Therefore, instead of just giving him some critiques or comments about his story, I wrote questions on his planner. His task, then, was to incorporate the answers to those questions into his draft. In this way, I could better hold Timmy accountable for revising aspects of his story that needed to be cleared up or further developed.

Figure 4.16: Timmy's Prewriting – *Frog Series*



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Timmy and I met once or twice a week for the next two weeks while he was drafting his story. He would hastily make additions to his story each time I had questions or suggestions. For example, I asked “What did the people in the stands do when the baseball players turned into frogs?” Ten minutes later, Timmy was back to meet with “The people screamed” written on the side of his paper. Although he was trying to make revisions and additions to improve the story, they were being added so haphazardly that it was hard for me to follow the story. I mentioned this to Timmy, and he spent a few days erasing and rewriting.

On May 23, Timmy and I met for his final conference. He had just finished revising with a friend who he said “loved the story!” Timmy was excited and eager to begin publishing. He had put a lot of effort into this story, much more so than any other writing assignment throughout the school year, so I gave Timmy permission to begin publishing. He immediately said “I’m choosing Kidspiration!” and raced over to the computer to get started. Timmy quickly logged on and started up the program, but couldn’t remember how to switch from the graphic organizer feature to the typing feature of the program. From across the room, I watched as Timmy asked Matt and Phil, both of whom were working on computers, for help. Phil was unable, and Matt tried for a few minutes before successfully switching to the typing feature. Timmy settled in to work.

I had a few students in my class who seemed to enjoy the act of typing as much as completing the finished product, and Timmy was one of those students. He worked on publishing *Frog Series* for almost a week, and more than once I saw him erasing some of the work he had done, just to try retyping it in a bigger point size or a different font. It appeared that Timmy enjoyed trying these different features of the program, and surprisingly, was content to keep working for several days instead of trying to finish as quickly as possible.

Frog Series

it was the last game of the world series the Yankees were the braves opponent it was 3-3 no way could the braves win because they would eventually be turned into

frogs by an evil scientist by name of Joe

who put frog potion in their drinks which turned them into frogs now there was a 0.1% chance of winning. only if a miracle happened. there were 9 innings we'll skip 8 for now. in the top of the 9th inning 3 outs came quickly the crowd went boo. then 2 outs came quickly the crowd screamed...then the pitcher was up no hope but the bases were loaded then grand slam the frogs win!!!!!"boogle boggle wobble" "oh oh oh" the scientist shot fire out of his ears "ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh"

screamed the scientist. the frogs turned back to normal. will joe return....

it was the last game of the world series the Yankees were the braves opponent it was 3-3 no way could the braves win because they would eventually be turned into

who put frog poison in their drinks which turned them

hope but the bases were loaded then *grand*

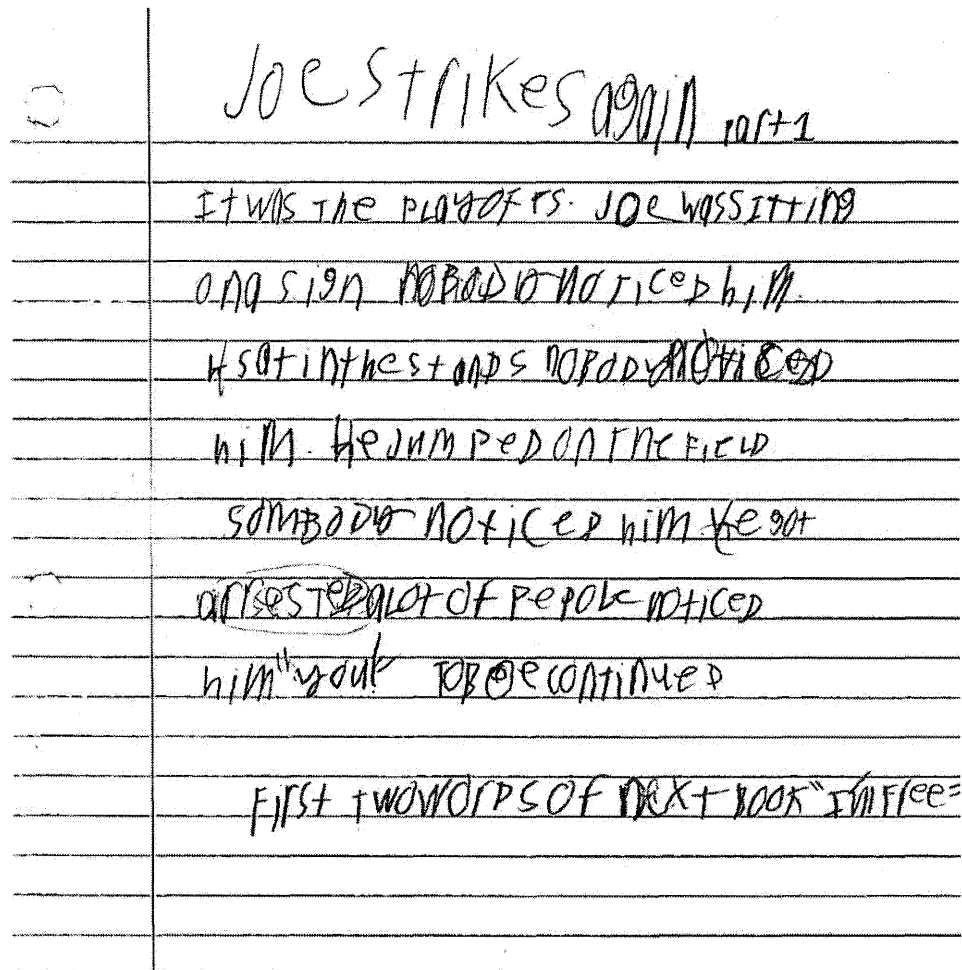
wobble" "oh oh oh" the
scientist shot fire out of his ears
"ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh"
screamed the scientist. the frogs
turned back to normal. will joe
return...

Timmy finished publishing *Frog Series* on June 1, 2011 (see Figure 4.17). He proudly showed me the work he had done, explaining that “it’s on a green background because it’s at a baseball game, you know, like the field.” Timmy also pointed out that he “chose cursive for the writing, but I can read cursive, and the words are bigger when you know it’s getting exciting.” One rule in our classroom for choosing different fonts was that the student must be able to reread the text in that font – Timmy was proud that he could read and write cursive, so he enjoyed choosing those types of fonts. Within a few minutes of printing his story (Timmy took the copy on the green background home and left the black and white version in his portfolio), he came back and announced “Now I’m *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*, drafting.” I understood that Timmy was updating me on his work status, but I was confused about the title. I asked Timmy to explain, and he said “Did you read the end of *Frog Series*? ‘will Joe return...’ Now I’m writing the next book about Joe.”

I was thrilled that this story was inspiring Timmy to write sequels, like he had in his *Books Come Alive* series. He worked on prewriting for the rest of writing workshop that day, then took a break the following day so he could complete his rubric (see Figure 4.18). For the next two days, Timmy stated “*Joe Strikes again, part 1*, drafting” at the beginning of writing workshop. On June 7, 2011, Timmy told me he was ready to publish. As this was a free choice story, I didn’t mention his quick pace, nor did I meet with Timmy, who said he “revised with a friend and did my own COPS.” I did ask Timmy to see the draft he was planning to publish. It was another short story, but I liked the idea, and I was happy that Timmy was spending so much

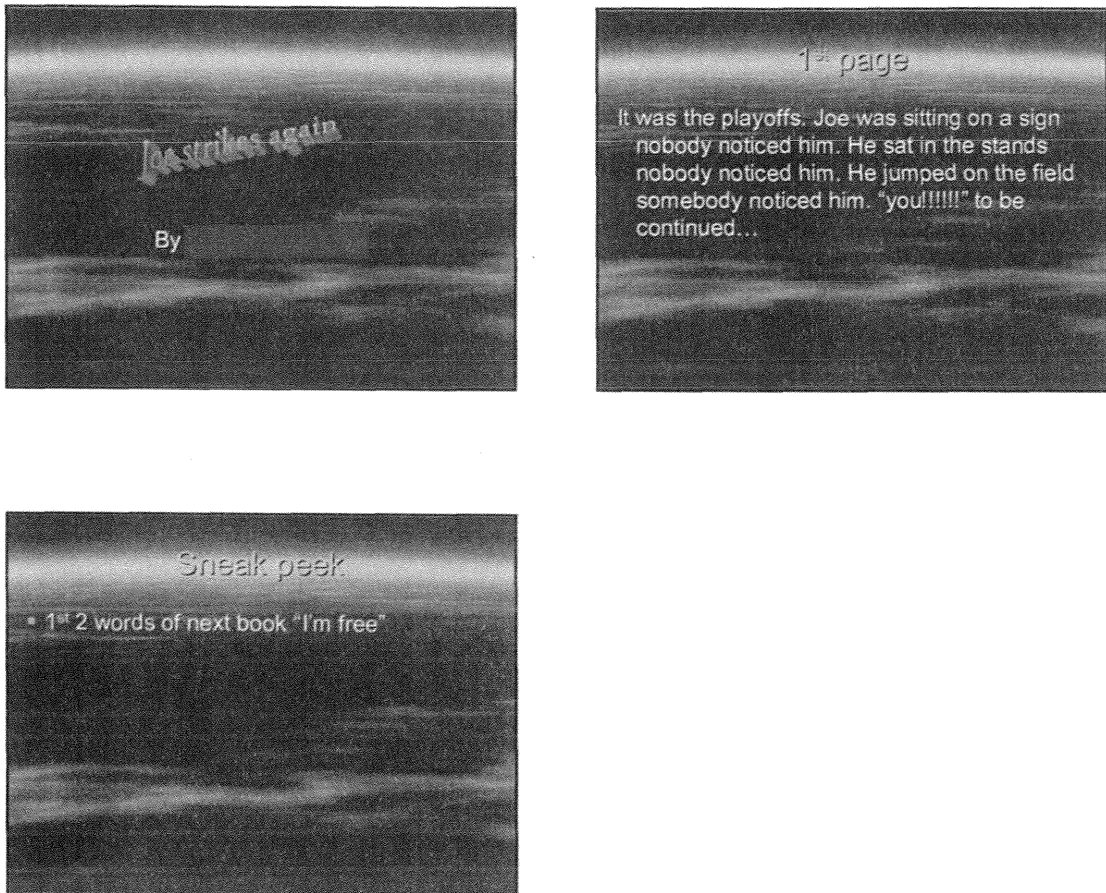
time with the topic, if not with the actual writing process. Timmy also mentioned that he was going to “publish this with PowerPoint, and then I’m going to publish *Joe Strikes Again, part 2* with Microsoft Word, and that way I’ll use all the programs.” This statement interested me for two reasons. First, it was the first time Timmy ever set a goal like that for himself – not to be the first one done, but to try something new. Second, I was interested to see the published pieces and discuss his reasons for using each one.

Figure 4.18: Timmy’s Draft of *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*



Timmy worked for the next few days publishing *Joe Strikes Again, part 1* with Microsoft PowerPoint. Again, I noticed that he seemed to be erasing and changing a lot – I checked in on him a few times, and while it seemed like the words were nearly all typed after the first day, Timmy put a lot of time into experimenting with different colors, backgrounds, and animation. When he was finished on June 9, 2011, Timmy showed me his completed story, and I was very pleasantly surprised. Timmy had made a three slide presentation for this story, and had added in animations to the different pieces of text (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19: Timmy's Final Draft of *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*



The next day, Timmy and I met for a formal interview and to discuss the rubric he had completed nearly a week earlier (see Figure 4.20). He had also finished *Joe Strikes Again, part 1* so we discussed that as well, although he hadn't self-assessed that story on the rubric. An excerpt of our interview is below:

Me: What is the title of your piece?

Timmy: Frog Series and Joe Strikes Again, part one.

Me: Which computer programs did you use?

Timmy: Kidspiration and PowerPoint

Me: Why did you choose that program?

Timmy: Kidspiration is a good choice for fiction, and it made a green background because it's a baseball game. I thought PowerPoint would be cool because it's good – mostly this whole thing is floating around (motions to printout of PowerPoint) – that's why I did cloud and float.

Me: Do you think using these computer programs makes your writing better?

Timmy: Yeah

Me: In what ways?

Timmy: They just both make more sense on these programs.

Writing, Timmy went on to say, is “easy to make a story” but “hard because it takes awhile to make them how you want when you're writing [by hand].” He said he liked “using computers better” and liked “the way my stories look on computer.”



I was particularly impressed with his knowledge of Microsoft PowerPoint and his ability to verbalize what he had done. Timmy had intentionally chosen animation schemes that would make his words to float in and disappear, which went along with the theme of the story (a scientist disappearing). Additionally, on the last slide, he used the “credits” animation scheme, so the words to roll up the screen and disappear – again, keeping with the theme. After we finished discussing his PowerPoint, we turned our attention to his rubric.

Evaluation

Timmy and I gave the same score for his story – 8 out of 12. I had mentioned to the students at the beginning of this assignment that the goal was for our scores to match, and Timmy was pleased when I pointed that out to him.

Figure 4.20: Timmy's Rubric for *Frog Series*

Appendix C


“Something Old, Something New” Writing Rubric


Name:

Title (fiction): Frog Series

I used: Microsoft Word Microsoft PowerPoint Kidspiration

	Just Beginning ☺	Getting Better ☺☺	I Can Do It! ☺☺☺	I gave myself...	My teacher gave me...
Content	My story isn't clear to a reader and I didn't use any details.	My story makes sense to a reader and has some details.	I have lots of great details and my story really hooks a reader!	00	☺☺
Word Choice and Sentences	I only picked a few interesting words and have simple sentences.	I picked some interesting words and used different sentences.	I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences.	0	☺☺
COPS	My editing needs lots of work.	I only did some editing.	My editing is all correct.	00	☺☺
Presentation	My story isn't clear with this computer program. It doesn't make sense to the reader.	This program can be used for this story. It's a little confusing for a reader.	This program was a great choice for my story. It's really interesting to a reader!	000	☺☺

Timmy and I rated *Frog Series* the same (2 out of 3) in two of the categories, “Content” and “COPS.” While discussing the rubric, Timmy was adamant about his content choices, saying that “I couldn’t tell it all in *Frog Series* or I couldn’t write *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*.” While I agreed, I explained that I still thought there was room for improvement in the first story alone, developing the characters and setting. Timmy and I did agree on the “COPS” rating – we both felt the lack of punctuation needed improvement. I was surprised at Timmy’s “Word Choice and Sentences” rating, and told him so. He said he thought his “sentences were easy and there wasn’t much talking.” I agreed, but pointed out the use of nonsense words from the scientist and the “0.1% chance of winning” sentence, and told Timmy I thought he had some very creative sentences. Timmy rated himself a 3 out of 3 for presentation, but I only rated him a 2 out of 3. I felt that Kidspiration, with its heavy use of graphics and creative text arrangements (which Timmy chose not to use) was a great choice for fiction, but that Timmy could have done more with the program to really enhance the visual aspect of his story. Timmy replied with “Maybe. But PowerPoint is good too and Word will be good too.” I had to agree, and admire his dedication to writing stories using all three computer programs.

My Reflections

Timmy as a Writer

Timmy’s writing samples, collected between February and June of the 2010-2011 school year, show some development and improvement. Timmy learned to use

sequence to make his stories clearer to a reader, and also tried to write about topics that are new and interesting. In terms of conventions, Timmy did not show a lot of growth. He still wrote short stories with simple sentences, although he began making an effort to make them more interesting. He often forgot punctuation, and his spelling was as good as it was in the beginning of the year. Timmy was a quick writer, and although he was proud of the pieces he published, he still had lots of areas for improvement, especially with conventions and sentence fluency. From this perspective, it doesn't appear that Timmy made much growth as a writer this year. To see the real changes he has made, the focus must be on him as a writer, not his writing.

Timmy began writing workshop in second grade with a sense of purpose – he was determined, each day, to be the first one done and ready to move on to the next step. As a result, Timmy's writing displayed these characteristics – his stories were simple and rushed. Starting with his *Books Come Alive* series and continuing through this writing project, Timmy began to be more interested in writing the story, instead of just finishing it as quickly as possible. I am not a teacher who typically makes demands of my students during writing workshop to “add three more details” or other artificial revisions. With Timmy, though, I realized I needed to be specific. He wasn't used to revising the content of his stories, only editing. If I gave him a vague suggestion, such as “tell me more about the scientist,” it wouldn't have been as productive as me saying “how did the scientist poison the players' drinks?” or “where

was the scientist when this happened?” Those specific questions helped Timmy focus on the details he was missing in his story.

I believe that because Timmy really took the time to revise and elaborate on this story, he became more interested in the topic and decided to turn this story into a series. Timmy didn’t set out to write several stories about an evil scientist – but in the process of revising *Frog Series* he became more interested in what else could happen, much like his *Books Come Alive* series. Timmy was excited about that series, sharing his published pieces with his friends before hurrying to put them in his mailbox to take home. I enjoyed hearing Timmy talk about these stories to his friends, discussing his plan as a writer. Near the end of the school year, while walking by his table, I heard Timmy saying to Nate, “and then, in *Joe Strikes Back, part 2*, I think he should come to school!” Nate affirmatively replied, and Timmy happily went back to his latest four-square planner.

Timmy’s Use of Technology

During one of our first technology workshops in the computer lab, Timmy mentioned that he “already used Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint at home.” I replied, “Great! Then you will be really interested to learn about Kidspiration!” Timmy was momentarily quiet before agreeing – it was a program he had never heard of before, and he was excited to learn about it.

Despite Timmy’s tendencies to rush through his work, he really enjoyed learning about the features of the different computer programs my students used

throughout the school year. He did have some basic knowledge of the Microsoft programs from his use at home, but I was able to introduce him to new features, such as Word Art, that he hadn't tried before. Timmy picked up new information and understood new features quickly, and along with Matt, became one the experts in our class. Timmy would help any student who asked him, but he preferred working alone at his computer, creating documents and PowerPoint presentations that he would then show me, print, and take home. Timmy seemed more interested in creating documents for himself and his family than sharing them with his peers. Once, after using the computers, Timmy told me he wanted "an iPad for Christmas like my mom's, and probably a Kindle, too." It was clear that Timmy's parent's encouraged and supported the use of technology in their home. Borawski (2009) found that

children's fluency in digital literacy was most affected by how frequently they had access to a computer and the Internet, how well their parents used and understood the technology, and the level of related instruction they received from teachers in school. (p. 54)

I believe that these three factors led to Timmy's engagement and proficiency with the computer programs that we used.

As a writer, Timmy stated several times that he "likes using the computer more" than writing with a paper and pencil. When he realized that he could use the different programs to publish his stories, I believe Timmy became more engaged and excited about his work. Both from a mechanical standpoint (the ease and convenience of typing) and a visual standpoint, Timmy enjoyed creating published pieces of

writing on the computer. He showed noticeably more focus and was able to sustain his attention longer in writing workshop when he was able to do that.

Timmy' Attempts at Digital Writing

As I mentioned earlier, I was very surprised and impressed by Timmy's plan to create a series of three different stories published on three different computer programs. I whole-heartedly supported his endeavor, and although he only published two before the end of the school year, I believe the two documents really demonstrate his confidence and competency with computer programs and digital writing. As opposed to simply using the computer to type a handwritten document, digital, or multimodal, writing enables students "to use their imagination and creativity to combine print, visual, and digital modes in multimodal combinations that can be and should be applied in classroom writing" (Edwards-Groves, 2011, p. 49). In my opinion, *Frog Series* and *Joe Strikes Again, part 1* are Timmy's first attempts at digital writing.

Frog Series, published on Kidspiration, demonstrated that Timmy was thinking beyond the text when publishing his story. He included some visual aspects that other students did, such as changing the font of the text and increasing the point size of different words for emphasis. However, he also intentionally chose Kidspiration so his story could be displayed with a green background. When Timmy stated that "it's on a green background because it's at a baseball game, you know, like the field," he showed that he was really thinking about how the reader would perceive

this story. In a way, he embedded the text of his story into the setting, and made a more powerful impact on the reader.

Timmy went a step farther with *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*. The premise of this story is that Joe, the evil scientist, appears and disappears. Timmy decided to publish this story with PowerPoint in order to utilize the animation schemes he had learned about during the year. Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski & Henry (2007) advocate for the use of presentation programs like PowerPoint, as they can “open new doors for student writers, because they can create images to accompany their stories or share them electronically with enhanced multimedia effects” (p. 699). Timmy did just that, choosing specific animation schemes that would match the theme of his story. When we discussed this story during the interview, he said that PowerPoint was good, and his story “is floating around – that’s why I did cloud and float.” By mentioning the names of the animation schemes he chose, Timmy showed how intentional and thoughtful his choices with this program were. Timmy also allowed the reader a quick “sneak peek” at his third story by choosing an animation scheme on the last slide that rolled away, leaving readers wondering what would happen next.

Conclusion

Over the course of this writing assignment, Timmy began to understand the merit of taking the time to slow down and revise his stories. As a result, he became more engaged in the process and independently decided to take on a new challenge – creating a three story series, publishing each story with a different computer program.

Timmy used his knowledge of the features of each piece of software to attempt digital writing, writing that encompasses more than just words on page. Timmy's proficiency as a user of technology and budding interest as a writer really came together, and he was able to publish two interesting and unique pieces of digital writing.

Looking Across the Case Studies

When looking across the case studies, I can see similarities in the students' attitudes toward writing, engagement with writing, changes to the writing process and writing development.

Positive Attitude toward Writing

Writing is traditionally thought of as a paper and pencil activity. My students complained all year about having to practice their handwriting, about their hands tiring from writing, about pencils breaking. I noticed that for many of my students, the physical act of writing often impedes their ability to compose a creative and complete story. Matt, Beth and Timmy all commented during this writing assignment that there was some aspect of paper and pencil writing they didn't like. Timmy, for example, mentioned that "it takes awhile to make them (stories) how you want" when writing by hand. Beth commented on her sloppy handwriting and how it's hard for her "to make spaces", and Matt simply stated that he felt typing was "easier than writing" by hand.

While each of the students negatively commented on the paper and pencil aspect of writing, all three were excited by and interested in writing using a computer program. Each student was noticeably more interested, more focused, and worked more diligently when he or she was on the “publishing” step of the writing process and able to use a computer. Timmy even wanted to continue writing a second story and try a different software program for publishing. I believe that as a result of this study, my students are beginning to see computers and these software programs as an integral part of the writing workshop. That belief contributes to their improved attitude toward writing.

I don’t believe that using a computer for writing should completely replace the task of paper and pencil writing. However, through this study I have seen how the opportunity to use a computer software program can increase interest and time on task in second grade students. Given the choice, most of my students preferred to complete the whole writing process that way. As an adult, I typically have the choice to write by hand or write at a computer, and I believe students should have the same choice.

Increased Engagement with Writing

All three case study students showed significant, positive changes in their level of engagement with writing over the course of the study. While working on paper and pencil tasks, Matt, Beth and Timmy were often distracted by their peers or hurried to accomplish their work as quickly as possible. Once the students became

more invested in their writing they were noticeably more focused, chose places to work that were free of distraction in the classroom and accomplished a lot during the writing workshop time.

I noticed more significant changes while the students were working with the computer programs during the “publishing” step of the writing process. In each case, the students were focused and worked for longer periods of time. They also were much more independent, asking for help much less often, both from me and their peers. Matt even chose a computer that was physically separate from those of his peers, to work with fewer distractions. Beth, Matt and Timmy used the software for more than just typing the words – they were rereading their work, making necessary changes, revising, and designing a complete published piece.

More Flexibility within the Writing Process

The writing process that my students follow was comprised of five steps: brainstorming, prewriting, drafting, editing and revising. Publishing was an optional step, although most of my students seemed to enjoy that the most. Through this study, I have seen a need for changes to that writing process. Edwards-Groves (2011) stated that

Rethorising writing in new times demands that pedagogical practices and understandings incorporate ‘designing’, ‘producing’, and ‘presenting’ as key elements of the writing process. To be relevant in the contemporary classroom these new dimensions of writing and text

construction need to sit beside ‘planning’, ‘drafting’, ‘editing’, ‘redrafting’, and ‘proofreading’. These new practices have generated the need for the writing process to be reconceptualised as the ‘multimodal writing process’ as students move recursively between and across phases of writing” (p. 62).

Beth, Matt and Timmy moved back and forth between the steps of the writing process while working with software. My students did some of their editing and revising with paper and pencil, but continued that work on the computer while publishing to produce a well written story. Each student was seamlessly rereading his or her work and making revisions and changes while publishing, often without realizing it. It became a necessary step as the words were clearly typed on the screen.

In addition, each of the students made thoughtful publishing choices while working on the computer, incorporating the “designing” element that Edwards-Groves (2011) mentioned. Matt began his story with an oversized letter, changed the font and changed the point size of some words for emphasis. Beth also changed the point size of some of her words, and included a colorful title page complete with pictures. Timmy went the farthest in designing his stories, setting the first on a green background to mimic a baseball field, and incorporating animation schemes that matched the theme of his second story. All three students demonstrated their understanding that using the computer program can go beyond simply typing the words.

Improved Quality of Writing

Beth, Matt and Timmy showed significant growth and improvement as writers over the course of this study, both in their writing abilities and in the quality of their published pieces. As a teacher, I expect that my students will produce their “best” pieces of writing toward the end of the year. Each student is bringing all his or her cognitive skills together to create a piece of writing that is developmentally appropriate in terms of his or her abilities. Beth, Matt and Timmy all matured throughout this study and their writing shows that growth. I believe, though, that the incorporation of the software programs raises the quality of work to a new level for each of the students.

In terms of conventions, the three stories published by the students had an interesting plot, included some characters, and had a unique storyline that would interest a reader. The students wrote much more straightforward and simple pieces of writing earlier in the year. The writing pieces that were published during this study were more complex, and had the added elements of color, design, and animation. I believe the use of the computer programs enabled my students to feel confident making revisions and changes during publishing, and also excited to try new aspects of the program to improve their stories.

Matt’s final piece, *The Greatest Game in History*, was the best piece of writing he completed all year. Matt learned how revising and editing and can improve a story, and he used that knowledge while working on the computer to make even more revisions and changes to improve his story. Beth learned how to incorporate her

voice and personality into her writing, and *Secret Life* really shows that. After publishing, she became inspired by her own work to create a second story, although the school year ended before she was able to complete that. Timmy became much more engaged as a writer during this process. He started to slow down and make thoughtful changes to his stories, and was so excited to publish *Frog Series* using Kidspiration that he also wrote and published a second story, *Joe Strikes Again, part 1*, using PowerPoint. Timmy was also experimenting with digital writing, incorporating multimodal aspects into his published pieces.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, I observed Beth, Matt and Timmy, three of my second graders during our writing workshop, and I sought to answer two research questions: In what ways does the use of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint and Kidspiration affect my second graders' engagement in the writing process? and How is the quality of my second graders' writing development and abilities affected by the incorporation of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Kidspiration into writing workshop?

In this chapter, I offer several conclusions, implications for students and my future work as a teacher, and recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

Based on my research questions and the findings of this study, I have come up with several conclusions.

Students Benefit from Choice and Flexibility in Writing

Throughout this study, I saw the writing process evolve. My students were familiar with the traditional writing process (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983), and understood the importance of the different phases of writing. I believe it is important to educate my students about the writing process and paper-and-pencil tasks (such as using graphic organizers or lists), but with a multitude of new ways to write, I believe those traditional aspects of writing should be considered options, as opposed to

mandatory steps. I agree with Edwards-Groves (2011), who stated that “multimodality does not replace important foundational writing skills but that the elements of the writing process are extended to account for the shift in textual practices that technology demands” (p. 62). Traditional methods of writing and new technologies can and should be utilized effectively in the writing workshop.

With the integration of the software programs, Beth, Matt and Timmy incorporated new steps into their process of publishing. Edwards-Groves (2011) found that the students in her study expressed their “knowledge of the writing process (drafting and editing) but...presentation, multimodality, and the explicit knowledge and application of elements of design [were] equally important in composing” (p. 61). I found the same to be true with my students; they were thoughtful of the multimodal elements that were used, such as color, design, and animation. In the stories they published independently, Beth and Timmy spent almost as much time working on the “publishing” step as the first four steps combined. I believe these new aspects of the writing process should no longer be considered part of publishing, but separate elements for the writer to consider while thinking about audience and purpose.

I also believe that the writing process should be understood as a more fluid and flexible process. As an adult, I rarely follow the complete writing process of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Rowe, Fitch & Bass, 2001) Instead, I am constantly “blurring the boundaries between the stages in the writing process” (Kervin and Mantei, 2009, p. 25), and my students were beginning to, as

well. Timmy, for example, didn't spend much time prewriting or drafting his second story – he already had an idea and seemed to find it more worthwhile to spend his time revising and publishing his piece. Based on my observations and our interviews, my students were also rereading their work while they were typing, and when one came to a word that needed to be fixed or had more information to add, he or she simply made the change. Revising and editing, and even drafting new sections, became a seamless part of publishing, as opposed to a separate step, as it had before. I believe that if I can help my students to understand each step of the writing process and its place in the bigger picture, they will be able to make decisions about the order and importance of those steps that will better benefit them as writers.

I think that writing should be more open-ended, and allow students more choice of both their process and product. My students were noticeably more engaged when they had their choice of writing topic and genre, and Beth and Timmy were inspired to continue writing. I have to mandate that certain pieces of writing are completed by my students each year, but I hope to find ways to provide more choice in how my students complete those pieces, and hopefully see better quality writing as a result.

Technology Should be Integrated into Writing Instruction

I chose to incorporate three software programs into my writing workshop, and can see potential far beyond the scope of this study. Edwards-Groves (2011) pointed out that “For many students, technologisation has enabled them to use their

imagination and creativity to combine print, visual and digital modes in multimodal combinations that can be and should be applied in classroom writing” (p. 49). My students used the software programs for much more than just typing. It appears that using the software enabled Beth, Matt and Timmy to improve the multimodal aspects of their pieces by incorporating color, visuals, and animation. Matt mentioned wanting his story to “look more like a chapter book”, and it seems that Beth and Timmy were also trying to make their work more authentic and similar to published pieces of writing they had seen. The students were using their knowledge of real texts and mirroring the aspects they valued in their finished pieces.

The incorporation of software programs echoes the need for changes to the writing process. Edwards-Groves (2011) stated that “‘planning’ often involves preparing and designing a multiplicity of texts which require a recursive movement between and across phases of writing. This process is not linear” (p. 61). As my students were publishing their stories, they encountered all the steps of the writing process in one way or another. Editing words, revising sentences and drafting new sections all took place while working with the computer software. Because my students understood the writing process, they were able to use their knowledge to effortlessly move back and forth between the steps.

In addition to educating students about the writing process, I believe teachers also need to explicitly instruct their students about the technology that they will be using in writing. Kervin and Mantei (2009) stated that “children need to know the ‘skills’ of both language and technology, but with opportunity to use these within

authentic, meaningful and contextualised experiences” (p. 20). Matt, Timmy and Beth all had prior knowledge of the software they were using, and therefore, were able to utilize it more effectively when publishing their stories. During their interviews, Timmy, Beth and Matt spoke comfortably about the benefits of the program they chose, which showed that they are beginning to understand both how and why the programs are used. With good instruction and authentic opportunities to write, students will be able to use new technologies that move beyond software, such as blogs and webpages (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Merchant, 2007) to extend and improve their writing. Merchant (2007) outlined several points for teachers incorporating digital and multimodal technology into writing, including:

- develop classroom approaches to digital literacy that take full cognisance of the interdependency of modes without detracting from the centrality of written representation;
- rethink the ways in which new technology is provided for young learners and in particular the role of digital technology in early writing;
- rethink how writing as a curriculum area is taught, developed, and assessed (p. 127)

By strategically planning instruction that integrates writing and new technology, I can help my students become better writers and more confident users of technology.

Writing Workshop Fosters Students' Growth and Development as Writers

Lucy Calkins (1986) stated that the writing workshop should be kept “*predictable and simple*” (p. 183, italics in original), but that does not mean it should be stagnant. Within the structure of the writing workshop, my students were able to confer, collaborate, explore and expand their abilities as writers. Beth, Matt and Timmy had opportunities to work both independently and with assistance from me or their peers to create their published pieces of writing. This enabled my students to discuss their writing topics with their peers, share ideas with friends, and receive suggestions and feedback throughout the writing process. As a result, I believe my students became more cognizant of their abilities and choices as writers. Kervin and Mantei (2009) elaborated on that point, stating that to encourage student growth and writing development, “teachers must promote an environment that empowers children as informed decision makers as they challenge and expand upon what they do when authoring text” (p. 31).

Jasmine and Weiner (2007) found that in writing workshop, students were able to “select topics of personal interest, write for authentic audiences, and learn conventions and mechanics of writing” (p. 131). This independence enabled Matt, Beth and Timmy to utilize their strengths as writers and create pieces of writing that were of higher quality than they had previously published. In terms of content, I see great improvement in all three students. Their stories are interesting, with a variety of characters and settings, and have plots that would certainly interest another second grade reader. Each of the students is beginning to write longer and more complex

sentences, and they all attempted dialogue in their stories. Beth, Timmy and Matt also made revisions while working on the computer, which I believe shows signs of a reflective and thoughtful writer. Calkins (1986) eloquently said that “revision does not mean repairing a draft; it means using the writing I have already done to help me see more, feel more, think more, learn more” (p. 39). I believe that through this process my students have begun to think more and learn more about themselves as writers, and I found great growth and improvement in their quality of writing.

As a teacher, it is difficult for me to weigh conventions against content when evaluating student writing. It’s true that in this study, each student’s published piece may have some spelling and punctuation errors. I helped each student correct their editing during our final conference, but each student worked independently to publish his or her story on the computer. While making revisions to the content, some editing mistakes may have occurred. I don’t see this negatively, but simply as part of each student’s growth as a writer.

My students’ use of the rubrics that I created for this study also helped them improve the quality of their writing and writing abilities. In the beginning of the writing assignment, the rubrics helped my students to understand my expectations. Although it was a fairly open-ended assignment, setting expectations and discussing the rubrics ahead of time allowed my students to have a clear focus while writing. Nauman, Stirling and Borthwick (2011) analyzed the opinions of 75 classroom teachers to come to some conclusions about good writing. They found that the notion of “good writing” is very subjective, and therefore, “teachers must make their

expectations clear in advance of writing” (p. 326). The authors go on to state that “Teachers have both a right and a responsibility to determine and discuss their own views of what makes writing good” (Nauman, Stirling & Borthwick, 2011, p. 327). Creating rubrics and sharing them ahead of time with my students ensured that we were all in agreement about what would be considered “good” for this task.

The rubrics also helped guide the conversations I had with Matt, Beth, and Timmy after they completed their published pieces. I asked each student to score himself or herself first, and then I filled in my scores on the same rubric, without looking at how each student had evaluated their piece. By doing this, I was ensuring that the students and I were honestly evaluating the writing. I believe that my conversations about the rubrics and published pieces of writing were one of the most beneficial outcomes of this study. My students were thoughtful and honest when discussing their writing and it really allowed me to learn more about them as writers. Graves (1983) mentions this important aspect of conferencing, stating that “When we speak, or when someone elicits information from us, it is as informative to the speaker as it is to the listener” (p. 138). The students and I learned from our conversations about the rubrics – I was able to learn more about the thought process that each student went through while writing, and they discovered insights about themselves and potential areas of growth.

Implications for Student Learning

There are several ways in which my future students will benefit from the concepts and ideas presented in this study.

Students Will Benefit from an Updated and More Fluid Writing Process

In my classroom and many others, the graphic representation of the writing process has either been a linear or cyclical form. I believe that it is becoming a more flexible and fluid process, and students should understand and embrace that change. As my students showed, writing can naturally move back and forth between drafting, revising, editing and publishing, especially when using software. Timmy, Matt and Beth were doing this unknowingly, but I believe it's important for students to become mindful of the process that they are undertaking. Students should experience and appreciate both handwritten work and writing that is done on a computer.

I also believe that the writing process needs to be updated to reflect the work that can be done while publishing with computer software. From simply changing the font of the text to inserting animation to creating a completely interactive piece, teachers and students need to look beyond the traditional "publishing" step and think creatively about what could be accomplished with different computer programs. There is a multimodal esthetic to be considered, and thoughtful decisions (such as Timmy's choice to set his story on a green background) can really elevate a piece of writing.

Students Need Instruction About and Opportunities to Explore Software

Programs

For my future students, I believe one of the most beneficial aspects of this study will be the knowledge of computers and computer programs that I will provide. This explicit knowledge, such as how to open and save a document, consists of skills that the second graders in my study have proven proficiency with and can be continuously built upon. The skills they learn will be completely transferable from home to school, as well. In addition to my instruction, the students in my study also had the benefit of youth, and enjoyed “playing” with the software programs, which has shown to be very beneficial. This led to Matt discovering how to add animation schemes to a PowerPoint presentation, and sharing that knowledge with his friends. Without that, Timmy may not have created the story that he did.

When students are given the opportunity to experiment with different computer programs, they often discover new aspects and are able to share that knowledge with their peers. I have also seen important discoveries made by my students, such as how to “undo” a deletion that wasn’t planned. The students are authentically discovering aspects of the programs that are important to them, and therefore, they understand more deeply and retain that information much longer than if they had learned a skill in isolation.

Digital Literacy Should be Incorporated into Writing Workshop

Digital literacy, as I discussed in chapter two, encompasses much more than simply typing a story. Digital literacy can include PowerPoint presentations, interactive publications, and websites. In my experience, elementary teachers often teach literacy and technology as two different subjects, when really, students would benefit greatly from understanding the connections between the two. Many of my students are familiar with computers and some of the software programs they used, but they didn't realize how valuable and how creative the programs can be.

Beth and Matt attempted to make their stories more visually appealing, but Timmy displayed the most interest in and aptitude for creating a piece of digital literacy. By using PowerPoint and choosing animation schemes that matched the theme of his story, he was really thinking beyond writing to produce a multimodal text that would be interesting to a reader. When students understand the possibilities like Timmy did, and have time to learn about and practice with the software program, they will be capable of creating new and interesting pieces of writing.

Implications for My Teaching

As a teacher, I will also benefit from the ideas and concepts presented in this study in several ways.

Further Exploration and Integration of Digital Literacy into Literacy

Instruction

After researching the topic of digital literacy, I began to understand the significance and implications for my teaching. However, after seeing the work my students completed during this study, especially from Timmy, I have a much greater interest in incorporating digital literacy into my classrooms.

As a self-proclaimed proponent of technology in the classroom, I try to stay up to date with current research and theories. Digital literacy is a relatively new idea, but one that can really change the way my students will interact with reading and writing. I always encouraged my students to try different computer programs for publishing, but now I realize how much more can be done. By further researching and embracing the idea of digital literacy, I can move my students writing beyond typing to the creation of multimodal or interactive texts and publications.

I have to shift my thinking, from being an expert to becoming a coach who enables her students the freedom to experiment with different programs and different features. When I agreed to let Timmy publish his last story using PowerPoint, even though he hadn't "formally" completed the writing process, he created the best piece of digital writing in our class. Once my students learned the basics, they really enjoyed experimenting and learning new things about the programs. I want to continue along that path, learning with them, and encouraging them to use what they've learned for an authentic purpose, not just the writing assignments I give.

Provide My Students Increased Choice in Writing Workshop

Throughout this study, I began to change my opinion about what writing is, and how the writing process works. I believe that writing no longer has to mean a completely correct, formally typed piece. In this study, my students were given the freedom to be creative with their publishing, and as a result, their writing really improved. I want to continue to use a variety of software to facilitate the writing process, and also expose my students to more presentation programs, graphic organizer programs and visual learning software. I believe that the more choices I can give my students in writing workshop, the more engaged and excited they will be about writing.

I also have seen the benefit of giving students options in writing. I believe that because my students were allowed to choose their own program to use for publishing, they were more confident and engaged writers. I want to incorporate that idea into the whole writing process. I can still introduce and model the traditional writing process to my students, but also model how I complete the process on a computer. I hope to help my students figure out what is most comfortable and productive for them, and to find their own routine in writing, much as I do as an adult. If my students are able to find their own way through the writing process, and feel confident in their choices, their writing may be of better quality because of it.

Provide Specific Expectations and Feedback during Conferencing

Conferencing, a major element of the writing workshop, played a big role in my students' growth and development as writers. Matt, Beth and Timmy all worked with their peers at some point in the writing process, which helped their stories develop. They were able to elicit feedback and suggestions from their peers, presumably the audience for whom they were writing. I also conferenced with each student at least three times, and found that during the writing process, specific feedback was very helpful. Asking my students questions such as "What will the character do next?" or "How did everyone else react?" enabled them to think more critically about their developing story. As opposed to the more general feedback I may have given in the past, it appears that this specific feedback helped guide my students thinking and helped improve their writing.

As was mentioned earlier, use of the rubrics also helped Matt, Timmy, and Beth develop their stories. Throughout this study, the rubrics were easily accessible by any student. I saw several students refer to the rubric while writing, which leads me to believe it was a valuable tool in my classroom. The rubrics also helped guide some of my conferences, because they provided specific targets for the students for the students to reach, such as "I have lots of great details and my story really hooks a reader!" or "I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences." By looking at the specific goals and providing specific feedback, the conference was more beneficial to a student like Timmy, who had difficulty using vague suggestions.

Share This Information Vertically and Horizontally with my Colleagues

While I want my future students to benefit from the findings of this study, I also see farther reaching implications. As a teacher and a researcher, I want to share my findings with other professionals in my school, both horizontally and vertically. By sharing information with the colleagues at my grade level, we will be better able to give our students similar educational experiences. In addition, the students will be able to collaborate and really produce meaningful work. Sharing vertically is imperative, as well. I believe it is important to know what the students in every grade level are doing, especially in terms of technology, so as a vertical team, we can continuously challenge their thinking and build upon their skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on my study, I believe there are several areas that would benefit from future research related to this topic.

How Digital Literacy is Integrated into Elementary Classrooms

While I believe that Timmy attempted digital writing in his last published piece, he did so unknowingly. I feel that more research is warranted in the area of digital literacy, specifically in elementary school. I have seen how the curious and experimental nature of my primary students encouraged them to try new things with the computer programs that we used. If that curiosity was supported with explicit instruction on what digital literacy is, how it looks, and how it is produced, I believe

that primary students would be able to complete new and interesting pieces of digital writing.

Using Each Individual Software Program in Writing Workshop

In order to gauge their confidence and competence with using computer programs, I allowed my students to choose the program they wanted to use to publish their stories. Doing this, though, led to a limitation in my research, because it was more difficult to compare the quality of writing across samples that are published with different programs. I feel that isolating a study to just one of the three programs at a time would allow researchers to more accurately evaluate the quality of writing produced with that program and a student's ability to understand and utilize the features of that program.

How a Student's Quality of Writing Changes Over Time

The brief timeline of my study only enabled me to evaluate my students' growth as writers across two or three published pieces of writing. I believe it would be beneficial to research how writing quality, with the incorporation of software programs, changes over a longer period of time. I would hypothesize that as a student continues to use the writing process and the technology involved, his or her stamina as a writer and quality of writing would improve. Furthermore, as students grow and become more able to verbalize their thinking, it would be beneficial to understand their thought processes and decisions regarding their written work and the technology

used. Because my students only published two or three pieces, I had the opportunity to see a small amount of growth, but was unable to see improvement and change over time.

Incorporating the Writing Process into Elementary Classrooms

As I stated earlier, I believe that the writing process is changing. While working through this study, my students completed two writing processes – drafting, revising and editing with paper and pencil, and then several or all of those steps again while working on the computer. It would be beneficial for researchers to examine both writing processes separately, and compare the time, effort, and output that came from each. Although I can see the changes that were made on the drafting paper, and on the typed drafts, it's impossible to say how the writing would be different if only one of those writing processes had been completed.

Final Thoughts

My students are part of the “Net Gen” (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kervin & Mantei, 2009; Merchant, 2007), a generation of students who have grown up with computers in school and at home, and expect technology to be integrated into their education. Traditional methods of writing still have a place in schools, but research shows that new technologies and techniques are becoming more prevalent. Digital literacy, the idea of reading, writing and creating multimodal texts, presents new challenges but also new opportunities for learning, for both students and me.

In this study, I hoped to enable my students to find their own path through the writing process, allow them to choose their own method of publication and encourage them to experiment with digital literacy. I feel fortunate to have learned as much as they did. I view writing and using technology in new ways, and I am inspired to incorporate what I've learned into my future teaching. The possibilities of using computers and software are much farther reaching than I initially thought, and I'm excited to learn more, think more, and try more. I realize now that when given the opportunity, students can often create pieces of writing that are far different, and far better, than I expected. I also learned that when I provide high expectations, support, and feedback, my students' engagement and quality of work is greatly improved.

As a teacher, I am charged with the task of simultaneously fostering my students' growth and supporting their development as effective writers and users of technology. My students' confidence in using the computer programs and pride in their finished pieces of writing leads me to believe that I achieved that goal in this study. I will continue to accomplish these goals by integrating technology into the writing workshop, providing support and flexibility within the writing process, and guiding student learning with instruction that is grounded in opportunities for exploration and authentic experiences.

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Date:	
Student:	
Student:	
Student:	
Student:	

Interview questions for second grade students

1. What is the title of your piece?
2. Which computer program did you choose?
3. Why did you choose that program?
4. What do you like/is easy about writing?
5. What do you dislike/is hard about writing?
6. Do you think using this computer program makes your writing better?
 - a. In what ways?



“Something Old, Something New” Writing Rubric



Title (nonfiction): _____

I used: Microsoft Word Microsoft PowerPoint Kidspiration

	Just Beginning ☺	Getting Better ☺ ☺	I Can Do It! ☺ ☺ ☺	I gave myself...	My teacher gave me...
Content	My information isn't clear to a reader. I didn't include any facts.	My information makes sense to a reader. I included some facts.	I have lots of great information and facts to make it interesting to a reader.		
Word Choice and Sentences	I only picked a few interesting words and have simple sentences.	I picked some interesting words and used different sentences.	I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences.		
COPS	My editing needs lots of work.	I only did some editing.	My editing is all correct.		
Presentation	This program doesn't help me share this information. It doesn't make sense to a reader.	This program could be used for my information. Some parts are confusing to a reader.	This program was a great choice to share my information. It's really clear to a reader.		



“Something Old, Something New” Writing Rubric



Name: _____

Title (fiction): _____

I used: Microsoft Word Microsoft PowerPoint Kidspiration

	Just Beginning ☺	Getting Better ☺ ☺	I Can Do It! ☺ ☺ ☺	I gave myself...	My teacher gave me...
Content	My story isn't clear to a reader and I didn't use any details.	My story makes sense to a reader and has some details.	I have lots of great details and my story really hooks a reader!		
Word Choice and Sentences	I only picked a few interesting words and have simple sentences.	I picked some interesting words and used different sentences.	I used lots of interesting words and have many different sentences.		
COPS	My editing needs lots of work.	I only did some editing.	My editing is all correct.		
Presentation	My story isn't clear with this program. It doesn't make sense to the reader.	This program can be used for this story. It's a little confusing for a reader.	This program was a great choice for my story. It's really interesting to a reader!		